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Sacred Spaces, Public Places: The Intersection of Religion and Space in Three Chicago Communities, 1869-1932

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SACRED SPACES, PUBLIC PLACES:
THE INTERSECTION OF RELIGION AND SPACE
IN THREE CHICAGO COMMUNITIES, 1869-1932

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

JOINT PROGRAM IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND PUBLIC HISTORY

BY

ELIZABETH HOFFMAN RANSFORD

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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education above all other attainments and who encouraged me to interrogate my surroundings from earliest childhood. My grandfather, who died in 2006, always believed I would write a “book” someday and took great interest in the early progress of this dissertation. I wish that he were here to see it.

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To Mom, Dad, and Charlie

*In memory of
Robert Leyrer Smith
1925-2006*

Human beings are invariably driven to ground their religious experience
in the palpable reality of space.

Benton Lane
Landscapes of the Sacred

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INTRODUCTION: RELIGION AND SPACE

Expressions of religious culture in the built environment have historically carried powerful connotations that transcend purely sacred associations. In the United States, the popular image of the Classic Revival Congregational meetinghouse poised on the village green of a New England town resonates in the shared national culture as a symbol of stability and small town community. In a different context, the tiny Gothic Revival Trinity Church in New York City's financial district, dwarfed by surrounding skyscrapers, gives rich visual metaphor to the marginal place of religion in the modern commercial metropolis.

Manifestations of religion on the landscape and in conceptions of space illuminate a variety of cultural impulses.¹ As the most tangible displays of religion on the landscape,

¹ Pierce Lewis notes that the human effort involved in changing the landscape makes any alterations to it a sign of significant cultural investment: "Our human landscape—our houses, roads, cities, farms, and so on—represents an enormous investment of money, time, and emotions. People will not change that landscape unless they are under very heavy pressure to do so. We must conclude that if there is really major change in the look of the cultural landscape, then there is very likely a major change occurring in our national culture at the same time." Pierce F. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, ed. D.W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 15. For a review of the literature on the cultural landscape as human autobiography, see Richard H. Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87, no. 4 (1997): 660-680. Phoebe Stanton articulates two particular reasons why churches are an important text for the comprehension of the values of a particular time and culture: "Many of them survive, for in the passage of time they have been less likely to be pulled down or allowed to fall into disrepair than secular buildings. Since the best energies and tastes of the period were often expended on them and leading architects designed them, these churches offer a meaningful reflection of the time from which they come." In *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 215.

religious structures embody and shape the theological understandings, cultural assumptions, and social aspirations of believers; sacred buildings convey how congregations perceive themselves and how they aspire to be perceived by others. Moreover, because houses of worship serve as visible markers of the cultural authority and political status of their builders, religious structures also reflect the secular values and aesthetic fashions of the public sphere. In less materially tangible ways, religious groups' engagements in civic debates over issues of morality and personal behavior in the public sphere can shape the meaning of public space and public places as well.

This dissertation focuses on the intersection of religion and space in three communities on Chicago's north shore—Ravenswood, Edgewater, and Uptown—between 1869 and 1932. Specifically, it examines the religious landscape of nineteenth-century suburban Protestantism and the ways that urbanization and changing cultural mores affected this landscape after the turn of the twentieth century. Over the entire period, the values held by Protestant congregations in these communities may be read from the physical structures that they erected and from the ways that they perceived, used, and attempted to regulate public space outside the boundaries of their properties.

Furthermore, on the changing landscape of the north shore one can trace the domestication of Protestant Christianity, the popularization of the suburban ethos, the rise of commercial leisure, the movement of Protestant values to the periphery of public life, and many of the attendant issues related to urbanization and secularization, including class, gender, and rising pluralism in the public sphere.² During the suburban period, the

² Because the African-American population of Chicago was mostly, during the period under review, confined to the Black Belt on the South Side, issues of race will play a less prominent role in this study. African Americans did not start migrating to Uptown in large numbers until the 1970's. See Roger

churches in north shore subdivisions contributed to the creation of a distinct sense of place founded on the middle-class domestic ideals and exclusive social status of well-to-do Anglo-Protestants. After the expansion of transportation networks diminished the psychic distance between the north shore and downtown Chicago, the processes of urbanization forced churches to re-envision and remake themselves according to a menu of choices. Ultimately, urbanization wrought a profound transformation in the relationship between religion and space on the north shore, resulting in a fractured and contentious urban religious landscape that bore little resemblance to its more unified suburban antecedents.

Description of the Project

Religion's cultural significance emanates from its position in the liminal space between the private and public spheres of human life, "at the intersection of inner experience and the outer world."³ As a result, religion finds expression both as intangible personal experience and as social power realized in bodies and space.⁴ This study focuses

Guy, *From Diversity to Unity: Southern and Appalachian Migrants in Uptown Chicago, 1950-1970*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 28.

³ Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), xxii. See also James Wind, *Places of Worship: Exploring Their History* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Alta Mira Press, 1997), 109-110. Sally Promey provides concise explanations of the private and public manifestations of religion: "Experientially, religion may include a sense of ultimate or existential meaning, values, order, or purpose; an awareness of the sacred or the holy; or a sense of relation to a transcendent being or higher power. Institutionally, religion generally involves an identifiable collective or community of adherents as well as a set of defined beliefs, ideas, practices, rituals, and symbols." Sally M. Promey, "The Public Display of Religion," in David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 42.

⁴ Jeanne Halgren Kilde elaborates on religion—specifically, Christianity—as social power realized in space: "The exteriors of Christian churches...broadcast the social significance of the buildings, the congregations, and Christianity itself throughout the broader landscape. A modest storefront church sends a far different message than does a massive cathedral sited prominently upon a hill. Inside and out, Christian buildings designate rank and position in social hierarchies. In their capacity as social

on the latter attribute of religion, in that it attempts to ground religious practice and belief in the material world. By grounding American Protestant culture in the experience of specific Chicago neighborhoods, the study looks to situate the momentous choices confronted by Protestant congregations across the United States in the decades before and after the turn of the twentieth century in the context of a local community fabric.

The periodization of this study falls between 1869 and 1932, roughly concomitant with two major events in American evangelical Protestantism: the end of the Civil War, which marked a high point in evangelical influence on American politics and culture, and the repeal of Prohibition, the last great gasp of Protestant hegemony in American culture. On a national level, this period saw urbanization and suburbanization, the breakdown of Anglo-Protestant cultural hegemony, and the rise of mass culture and consumer capitalism. For these reasons, American cultural historians have long marked the period between 1870 and 1930 as a time of radical, often jarring change and as a period of marked secularization in American popular culture, when the cultural codes of Victorian Protestantism succumbed to the values of a more pluralistic modernity.⁵

designators...church buildings and spaces are political places, places in which social power and authority are asserted, tested, and negotiated.” Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10-11.

⁵ See T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003); Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin’ Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981); Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongel Manhattan in the 1920’s* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century* (New York: Philadelphia, 1986).

In this context, this study asks a series of questions meant to illuminate not only the history of three of Chicago's north shore neighborhoods, but a broader national religious story. What role did churches play in the social and cultural life of early suburbs? How did this broad trend play out when the congregations of a suburban community confronted change in the form of a booming commercial leisure culture, centered in "temples" of secular amusement and catering to large numbers of pleasure seekers from other parts of the city? In what ways did churches attempt to maintain cultural authority in the modern city, and in what ways was their authority compromised?

The story of the north shore's churches has much to do with the growth of Chicago and its transformation from a contained walking city in the mid-nineteenth century to a sprawling suburban metropolis by the mid-twentieth. Because the expansion of transportation networks played a critical role in the evolution of Ravenswood, Edgewater, and Uptown, these communities provide a unique opportunity to study Protestant church building and religious concepts of space during this time. Before the extension of commuter train lines from Chicago, the terrain along the lake, five to seven miles north of downtown, was characterized by windswept sand dunes, reedy marshes, and isolated patches of woodland. The construction of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad along the lake and the Chicago and North Western Railroad two miles west of the lakeshore made this unlikely landscape the target of land speculation and, by the turn of the twentieth century, three subdivisions along these rail lines formed a triangle of related suburban communities. Ravenswood, founded in 1869, defined the western corner, with Edgewater forming the northern corner in the late 1880's and subsequently Buena Park and Sheridan Park—which later became parts of the Uptown

neighborhood—completing the south corner on the lake. In the dissertation, Ravenswood, Edgewater, and Uptown are designated collectively as the “north shore” because this term, often used by contemporaries, encompasses in a general way the geographical area under examination.⁶

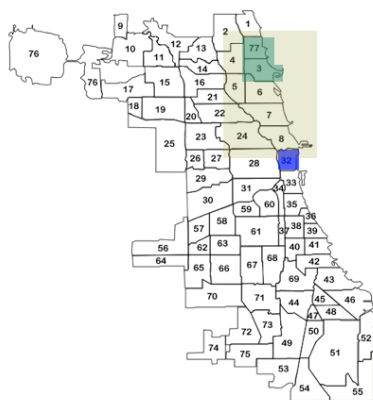


Figure 1. The Uptown (3) and Edgewater (77) community areas, in relation to the Loop (32) and the rest of the city of Chicago. The light brown overlay indicates the area depicted in Figure 2.

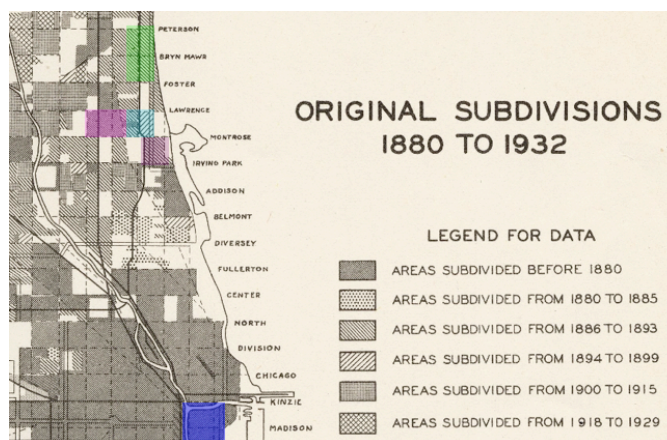


Figure 2. Detail of map of Chicago showing original subdivisions, 1880 to 1932. The dark blue overlay at the bottom of the map indicates the downtown area around the Loop. To the north, Ravenswood is indicated by the pink box, Edgewater by the green, Buena Park by the purple, and Sheridan Park by the light blue. Note the black lines indicating train tracks through these communities. Map created by Homer Hoyt, 1932. University of Chicago Library.

⁶ Technically, all three communities were part of the original Uptown Community Area created by Chicago School sociologists in the 1930's, which stretched from Lake Michigan west to Ravenswood Avenue and from Irving Park Boulevard north to Devon Avenue. Due to the social dysfunction and dubious reputation of Uptown in the 1960's and 1970's, Edgewater homeowners north of Foster Avenue succeeded in breaking away from Uptown and establishing the Edgewater Community Area in 1980, complicating any clear designation of the historical geography with current terms. Furthermore, in the early years of this study, Uptown as such did not exist. Instead, several different suburban developments occupied the area: Buena Park, Sheridan Park, Margate Park, and Argyle Park. I excluded Margate Park and Argyle Park from my study because neither development included a church within its boundaries.

The physical development of Ravenswood, Edgewater, and Uptown occurred almost exclusively between 1869 and 1929. In the 1870's, Ravenswood was a bucolic commuter village, which grew slowly and modestly over the next two decades. Starting in the 1880's, Edgewater, Buena Park, and Sheridan Park emerged, advertising themselves as the newest, choicest suburbs for wealthy elites. These communities, particularly the sections near the lake, experienced the most rapid development of any neighborhood in Chicago between the 1885 and 1925. By the nineteen-teens, a concentration of streetcar lines and the El near the lake produced Uptown, the largest and most profitable commercial district in Chicago outside of the Loop. The economic vitality of the Uptown shopping and entertainment district resulted in skyrocketing real estate values that spread throughout the north shore, dramatically altering the landscape and to a large degree changing prosperous single-family residential communities into an urban hub of apartments, hotels, shopping, and commercial amusements populated by transient young single people and couples. A forty-year period of seemingly limitless physical development came to a close with the onset of the Great Depression, which—compounded by World War II—halted residential, commercial, and religious construction for more than two decades.

Between 1869 and 1932, roughly forty religious congregations established a physical foothold on the landscape of the north shore. This dissertation concentrates on the mainline Protestant churches among them for several reasons. First, this study examines the public face of churches in the community. Protestant churches dominated the physical landscape throughout this period and they played more visible and active roles in the public sphere. Second, evangelical Protestantism was the dominant religious

affiliation of the nineteenth century, not only in north shore suburbs but across the United States. One of the themes of this study is the transition from Protestant cultural hegemony to religious pluralism and an aggressive secularism governed by commercial enterprise, so it made sense to focus on the fortunes of these churches in the face of urbanization.

It is important to note that this study employs the term “evangelical” to designate a collection of beliefs that united most American Protestants in the nineteenth century, a “broad consensus in nineteenth-century American Protestantism which emphasized the importance of an individual religious conversion experience.”⁷ Sydney Ahlstrom provides the classic description of evangelicalism’s main features: “the infallibility of the Scriptures, the divinity of Christ, and man’s duty to be converted from the ways of sin to a life guided by a pietistic code of morals.”⁸ Such beliefs would become the crux of battles between modernists and fundamentalists in the nineteen-teens and nineteen-twenties, but until that period of theological contention most Protestants could agree on these tenets. Readers should keep in mind the distinction between the nineteenth century usage and that employed by Christian evangelicals from the 1950’s on, who used—and continue to use—the term to distinguish themselves from theological liberals on the one hand and fundamentalists on the other.

Finally, this dissertation focuses on the north shore’s Protestant churches because much of the scholarly work on churches in American cities and in Chicago particularly has focused on Catholic churches—particularly those founded by immigrants—and the

⁷ James W. Lewis, *The Protestant Experience in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1975: At Home in the City* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 12.

⁸ Sidney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 845.

parish form, neglecting Protestant church populations and the congregational form.⁹ On the north shore, however, more can be learned from a study of Protestant churches. Throughout the nineteenth century Protestants had a complex relationship with the city, to say the least. This dissertation traces Protestant efforts to escape the city and establish pure moral geographies in the suburbs, as well as their efforts to first battle and then adapt to encroaching urban forms. Furthermore, as Chapter Three briefly illustrates, north shore Catholics in the suburban period seem to have shared a middle class identification with their Protestant neighbors and tended to adhere to traditionally Protestant-identified behaviors and values.¹⁰

Survey of the Literature

This study looks at the intersection of religion and space in a local context. As such, it draws on several fields of scholarship: cultural and social history, geography and material culture, architectural history, and the history of religion. Despite the growing influence of geography and landscape studies within the discipline of history over the last

⁹ Ellen Skerrett, Edward R. Kantowicz, and Steven M. Avella, *Catholicism, Chicago Style* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993); John McGreevey, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Eileen M. McMahon, *What Parish Are You From?: A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

¹⁰ While the focus of this dissertation did not permit a detailed exploration the suburban Catholic parishes at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the topic is wide open and invites further research. The overwhelming historiographical focus on the urban, immigrant parish has obscured the early suburban Catholic experience. I have found that the experience of suburban Catholics during this period differed from that of urban Catholics in two significant ways. First, suburban Catholics did not predominate in the residential districts in which they lived. Second, their upward mobility left them more likely to mimic the forms of middle class respectability modeled by their Protestant neighbors. These altered social dynamics forced suburban Catholics to think about moral geography and sacred space differently than their urban counterparts. Any links between the Catholic Total Abstinence movement and suburban parishes might provide a fruitful starting point in exploring early suburban Catholicism.

two decades, historical literature on American religious space remains scarce. Part of this neglect is due to a tendency among historians to treat religion as simply a variable that stands for something else: ethnicity, class, or race. In American historiography, religion often appears only at periods in which it becomes an instrument by which groups exercise power, whether hegemonic or subversive.¹¹

Geographer Wilbur Zelinsky was the first American scholar to approach the relationship between religion and space in “An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States: Patterns of Church Membership in 1952,” published in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* in 1961. Zelinsky notes the slippery, problematic nature of religion for study by cultural scholars, precisely because the experiential factors of religious identity—such as intensity of belief, personal devotion, or awareness of the sacred—are nearly impossible to assess or quantify. For Zelinsky, any reliance on material culture to compensate for this difficulty is complicated by what he calls the two distinct markers of American religious practice: diversity and constant change. Yet these conditions—somewhat unique to religion in the United States—allowed for a situation of dynamism that led Zelinsky to formulate the question on which the premise of this dissertation depends: “Is religion cause or effect in the cultural landscape, or somehow both?”¹²

¹¹ Kathleen Neils Conzen enumerates the points at which religion intrudes in an otherwise secular narrative of American urban historiography: “as an instrument for the social control of the new urban proletariat in antebellum reform and Social Gospel movements; as a sector in the public sphere in which women could exercise power; as a consolation to uprooted immigrants and racial minorities and as an inhibitor of their radicalization; and as a refuge from urban pluralism and materialism for the twentieth-century native-born white working class.” Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Forum: The Place of Religion in Urban and Community Studies,” *Religion and American Culture* 6, no. 2 (1996): 109.

¹² Wilbur Zelinsky, “An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States: Patterns of Church Membership in 1952,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51 (June 1961): 149.

Zelinsky's article broke ground in the geography of American religious places, but despite his calls for more work and suggestions for the future study of religion and place, including intensive local studies, little was accomplished in the field for nearly three decades.¹³ Other fields of scholarship were bereft of inquiries into religion and space as well. In 1986, the reviewer of a research guide for material culture asked "why [is] so little attention...paid, in this volume and in the literature generally, to the material manifestations of religion. The artifacts of religious belief and practice...[are] long overdue for informed historical and cultural analysis."¹⁴

Historians soon began to redress this deficiency in the historical analysis of religion's material manifestations. The increasingly popular study of lived religion in America, pioneered in Robert Orsi's *Madonna of 115th Street* (1985), grounded religious practice in the realities of everyday life, thereby legitimizing the consideration of material culture and visual culture as valid texts for the historical interpretation of religion as a

Further complicating the study of religion and space in the United States, statistical sources like the United States census do not gather data on religious identity. The lack of adequate data, Zelinsky contends, leads geographers to restrict their inquiries to material culture, "the effects of religious faith and practice on the cultural scene, especially architecture, urban and village morphology, and other phases of the settlement landscape." Ibid., 141.

¹³ In 1976, when geographer James Shortridge published an article on religious diversity and the liberal/conservative religious divide in *Geographical Review*, he concluded, "Religious geography is still in its infancy." James R. Shortridge, "Patterns of Religion in the United States," *Geographical Review* 66 (Oct. 1976): 434. Instead, the most significant offering in the field of religious space during this period emerged in the form of an architectural survey, Harold W. Turner's *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979). While this work did not focus on the American landscape, in its comprehensive survey of the world religions' different worship spaces, it included some examinations of sacred space in the United States.

¹⁴ Gregg Finley, review of *Material Culture: A Research Guide*, by Thomas J. Schlereth, *Winterthur Portfolio* 21 (1986): 334.

social and cultural experience.¹⁵ In the 1990's, scholars brought the material and visual dimensions of religion to the center of their inquiries into the history of American religious expression. Colleen McDannell built upon two decades of material culture research in other fields in her groundbreaking work *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (1995).¹⁶ Meanwhile, David Morgan produced several works on the visual culture of religion: *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (1998), *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (1999), and a collection of essays edited with Sally Promey, *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (2001).¹⁷ While this dissertation—a study of buildings and public space—does not engage as much with the religious artifacts and art examined by Morgan, it does build upon McDannell's assertions that "[t]he non-written text is also a language of expression of American life and culture" and that "the material dimension of Christianity may be used to decipher the meanings of religious life in America."¹⁸

While this dissertation tends to avoid the term "sacred space" in favor of the less subjective "religious space," the study of sacred space has also informed historical

¹⁵ Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). See also the essay collection edited by David D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹⁶ Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). See also R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁷ David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture, and the Age of American Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also David Morgan and Sally M. Promey, *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁸ McDannell, 2.

research on the material dimensions of American religion. Historically, the study of sacred space has been divided between two schools: essentialists, who emphasize the autonomous, mystical qualities of sacred space, and constructivists, for whom sacredness is cultural construction, void of essential meanings. Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (1959) is the modern starting point for the essentialist point of view. In Eliade's vision of sacred space, such space radically sets itself apart as a site of mysterious, supernatural power: "Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane."¹⁹ In contrast, the constructivists—most often traced to Emile Durkheim and Claude Levi-Strauss—hold that sacred space is a culturally determined entity upheld by the social practice of ritual.²⁰ Historians tend to favor the constructivist approach—as found in Edward Linenthal's *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (1991) and John Sears' *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in Nineteenth Century America* (1989)—and this dissertation may be seen as part of this trend toward constructivist analysis.²¹

¹⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 11. The threshold of a church building in a modern city, Eliade argues, is both a limit and a passage between profane and sacred worlds: "The church shares in an entirely different space from the buildings that surround it. Within the sacred precincts the profane world is transcended." (25-26) According to Eliade, when a place manifests its sacred nature, it becomes detached from the surrounding territory and creates a point of passage to another world, a "gate of heaven."

²⁰ The dichotomy of the sacred and the profane is a central theme in Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology* (1912). In this work, Durkheim posits the theory that the sacred is an expression that emerges from social forces rather than from any intrinsic value. Levi-Strauss expanded upon Durkheim's theory by attempting to illustrate how religious myths and symbols are simply expressions of the larger social order. See, for a start, his essay "The Structural Study of Myth" (1955).

²¹ Edward Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Champaign: The University of Illinois Press, 1991); John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

While the above-mentioned historians have grappled with issues of religious material culture and sacred space, studies of the American religious landscape and the built environment of American Protestant Christianity have been limited.²² American historians have studied the social impact of religious congregations—particularly Roman Catholic ethnic parishes—on local communities, but the built environment usually plays a minor role in these works.²³ Until recently, most studies of religious buildings came from an architectural historical perspective, either as specialized period or genre studies.²⁴ The work of Peter W. Williams, a religious studies scholar, is an exception in that it pioneered a broader discussion of religion and the landscape, starting with his 1988

²² Outside of religious buildings, the strategy of looking at style and form in buildings as clues to cultural values has been employed by historians since at least the early 1980's, especially by women's historians studying ideals of domesticity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: in the context of the model home, Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); in the context of alternative domestic experiments, Dolores Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981); in the context of women's colleges, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from their Nineteenth Century Beginnings to the 1930's* (New York: Knopf, 1984). This burgeoning interest was not limited to women's history; Lary May looks at architectural style and ornament in movie palaces in *Screening Out the Past*, his social history of the movie industry.

²³ One important congregational study of the urban Protestant experience is James W. Lewis, *The Protestant Experience in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1975: At Home in the City* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992). On Catholic congregations, see Skerrett, et al. *Catholicism, Chicago Style*; McMahon, *What Parish Are You From?*; McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*; Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Lost City: Discovering the Forgotten Virtues of Community in the Chicago of the 1950's* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); and Ellen Skerrett, ed., *At the Crossroads: Old Saint Patrick's and the Chicago Irish* (Chicago: Wild Onion Books, 1997). While all of these books touch on the connections between space and religion, McGreevy's argument approaches a new level of understanding of their conjunction, in its "central claim...that American Catholics frequently defined their surroundings in religious terms." McGreevy, 4.

²⁴ For period studies, see Harold Wickliffe Rose, *The Colonial Houses of Worship in America* (New York: Hastings House, 1963); Edward W. Sinnott, *Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963); Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New York: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1986); Marc Treib, *Sanctuaries of Spanish New Mexico* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993). Genre studies include Phoebe Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968); Albert Christ-Janer and Mary Mix Foley, *Modern Church Architecture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962); Bartlett H. Hayes, *Tradition Becomes Innovation* (New York: Pilgrim, 1983); Paul Eli Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894-1930* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

article, “Religious Architecture and Landscape” in the *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*. In this article, Williams notes that Americans have enjoyed the unique opportunity, relatively unknown in Europe, of creating new worship spaces to embody their beliefs.²⁵ William’s book-length survey of religious architecture, *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States*, came out in 1997, and it remains the most encompassing—if general—examination of the topic.²⁶

Williams provided the underpinnings of some of this dissertation’s arguments about urban religious space in a 1999 article, “The Iconography of the American City, Or, A Gothic Tale of Modern Times.” The timeframe of this article reflects the periodization of this dissertation: “the heyday of the American City,” from the post bellum era to the Great Depression.²⁷ Williams advances the argument that

[c]hurches, synagogues, and other religious buildings...are in a continual mute dialogue with their surroundings, which in an urban context tend to be other buildings of commercial or civic purpose. The context is also four-dimensional. Not only do religious buildings themselves undergo expansion, remodeling, and changes in denominational identity, but their neighbors frequently change even more rapidly.²⁸

²⁵ Peter W. Williams “Religious Architecture and Landscape,” in *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*, Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988), 1339.

²⁶ Peter W. Williams, *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Williams chooses regionalism as an organizing rubric for inquiry into patterns in the American religious landscape. This method of organization is problematic and, for “The Old Northwest” at least, fails to be more than mildly illuminating; even Williams observes that the Midwest region is “linked more by a shared geography and economy than cultural coherence.” *Houses of God*, xi-xii. I would argue that such an extensive regional survey does not allow for engagement with a larger social context in the way that an intensive local study does.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Peter W. Williams, “The Iconography of the American City: Or, a Gothic Tale of Modern Times,” *Church History* 68 (June 1999): 373.

In tracing the rise and fall of the Gothic Revival style in American monumental church building, Williams further argues that among the many possible lines of interpretation, social historians might find evidence of “the emergence of a moneyed elite at first reveling in conspicuous display, then searching for legitimation, going on to seek to impose order on an increasingly turbulent society, and finally embracing the cult of progress and efficiency in an increasingly national frame of reference.”²⁹ Here, Williams demonstrates the utility of a narrow focus, which allows for far more nuanced interpretations than evidenced in his broader regional surveys.

Two other works from this period have influenced this dissertation and merit particular mention here: Daniel Bluestone’s *Constructing Chicago* (1991) and Dolores Hayden’s *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (1995). *Constructing Chicago* provides the closest thing to a Chicago precedent for my study, in that it specifically addresses the role of religious space in Chicago. In this study, Bluestone attempts to understand “how culture made itself manifest in Chicago’s nineteenth century cityscape,” devoting one chapter to an examination of how attitudes about commerce, class, and gender held by middle class Chicagoans shaped the placements and architectural styles of churches erected in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., 396-397.

³⁰ Daniel Bluestone, *Constructing Chicago* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 2. Faced with ever increasing industrialization and the encroachment of the skyscraper on downtown areas, in the late nineteenth century churches sought to escape from the business district to more domesticated residential neighborhoods. Bluestone argues that the relocation of churches from the downtown center to outlying residential areas reoriented churches from a public to a private focus. This move carried gendered connotations as well. As the church retreated from the business area of the city, it left the masculine space of commerce ungoverned by a moralizing presence. Removed from the centers of power and erected in the Gothic Revival style, a clearly demarcated separation from the governing trope of commerce, the skyscraper, churches became a part of the woman’s private, domesticated sphere. For Bluestone, these developments speak to a general desire for a carefully segmented world among middle-class Chicagoans of the 1860’s and 1870’s.

Bluestone's nuanced argument illustrates the complex cultural values that may be read from the style and situation of church buildings and how church buildings may stand in for broader cultural changes as well.

Hayden's book, *The Power of Place*, is important to this dissertation for the broader theoretical perspective it advances about the study of place and the built environment in general. Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, Hayden argues that the production of space can reveal much about the meanings that people invested and continue to invest in their surroundings: "Urban landscapes are storehouses for...social memories, because [they]...frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes."³¹ Although Hayden does not specifically address religious space, *The Power of Place* is significant because, building on the work of geographers like J.B. Jackson, it elevates the importance of vernacular spaces. By reconnecting with vernacular space, Hayden argues, the historian can create "a socially inclusive urban landscape history."³²

The Power of Place coincided with the rise of landscape studies within the discipline of history, which, over the last fifteen years, has seen increasing attention to the ways in which space and the physical landscape illuminate the social and political history of urban places.³³ It also coincided with the publication of *American Sacred*

³¹ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 9.

³² *Ibid.*, 12.

³³ The first stirrings toward an integration of cultural and landscape studies emerged concomitantly with Bluestone's *Constructing Chicago*. Space became central to some historical studies, as scholars all over the topical board looked at the ways that cultural attitudes shaped the built environment. See Michael Gebhard and Drummond Buckley, *The Car and the City: The Automobile, The Environment, and Daily Urban Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Timothy Gilfoyle, in *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: Norton, 1992); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-*

Space, a book of essays by historians edited by David Chidester and Edward Linenthal.

While the essays in this book—on such topics as mountains, the Holocaust museum, and Christian home schooling—have little direct bearing on the subject of this dissertation, the introduction provides a good outline of the issues at play in the study of religious space. For Chidester and Linenthal, the central reality of sacred space is its character as a site of conflict. The authors also recognize the consequences of designating a place sacred: the problematic nature of entanglement with “profane” enterprises and the omnipresent threat of desecration, defilement, or dispossession in a constantly shifting moral geography. Like Lefebvre and Hayden, Chidester and Linenthal observe that sacred space is located “within a larger network of political, economic, and symbolic relations of power.”³⁴ Their argument that religious space represents an excellent lens through which to examine dynamics of social authority shapes many of the arguments made in this study.

The twenty-first century has seen an upsurge of interest in the American religious experience as seen through the lens of architecture, space, and the built environment. Sarah Deutsch and Daphne Spain have both explored the ways in which women’s religiously motivated moral activism shaped the urban landscape at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, but the best work in this field to date is Jeanne Halgren Kilde’s *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of*

1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Michael Kammen, *In the Past Lane: Historical Perspectives on American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁴ David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, *American Sacred Space*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15.

Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth Century America (2002).³⁵ Kilde combines the architectural history of church buildings with a cultural historical focus beyond the walls of the church, looking “to the social contexts that define relationships to power not only within the church space but among clergy, laity, and the wider community.”³⁶ In tracing the popularity of the auditorium-style church among evangelical congregations in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Kilde ties the rise of a new style of worship space to broader changes in evangelical Protestantism and, by extension, American society and culture of the period. Her study embraces not only worship space, but also public discourse, the economics of church building, the political considerations of exterior design and siting, and the relationship between the physical design of the church to the evangelical conception of the Christian family. For Kilde, the study of church architecture becomes as much a study of people as of buildings; religious structures are “valuable cultural texts that embody the values and meanings important to middle-class evangelical Americans at precisely the period of their greatest influence.”³⁷ *When Church Became Theatre* is a model for this study.

³⁵ In *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (2002), Deutsch focuses on working class and middle class women in Boston, who, she argues, created spaces for themselves in places ranging from cafeterias and women-owned businesses to settlement houses and women’s clubs. Deutsch argues that these spaces allowed women a comfortable, respectable place to practice for their entry into the public sphere, and transformed the “moral geography” of the city. Less successfully, in *How Women Saved the City* (2000), Spain argues that religious women created “voluntary vernacular” spaces for the administration of charity that staked out their claim in the urban environment. Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

³⁶ Kilde, 10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

This dissertation is also situated in secondary fields: the historiography of urbanization and urban social history and the historiography of Chicago's north shore neighborhoods. It draws from works on urban expansion like Sam Bass Warner's *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* and Ann Durkin Keating's *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis*.³⁸ My work also builds upon a new school that purposefully includes religion as a category of analysis in urban history. John Michael Giggie and Diane Winston observe: "During the last decade, continued interest in social history and concurrent explorations of urbanism and commercial culture have made it increasingly difficult for scholars working in these areas to ignore religion, a key factor for the production of meaning and identity."³⁹ In the past, urban religion was seen as having little to do with how city dwellers lived their lives, with religion and commercial culture positioned as opposing cultural forces. The last three chapters of this dissertation in particular fall in line with recent works that instead look at the interplay between urbanization, religion, and commercial culture. With James Welbourne Lewis, author of *The Protestant*

³⁸ Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Ann Durkin Keating, *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988).

³⁹ John Michael Giggie and Diane H. Winston, *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 3. Works that deal with the intersection of urban and commercial culture and religion include Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); David G. Hackett, *The Rude Hand of Innovation: Religion and Social Order in Albany, New York, 1652-1836* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Paula Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Gary Wray McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah, Georgia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993); Deborah Dash Moore, *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Dream in Miami and Los Angeles* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Judith Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Experience in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1975, I argue that “Protestants engaged in a sometimes heroic effort, not to transplant a rural church to an urban setting, but to discern how to live as Protestant Christians in a rapidly changing urban world.”⁴⁰

The existing literature on the Uptown community area, which also encompassed Edgewater and the eastern part of Ravenswood, is heavily weighted toward sociological studies that chart the neighborhood’s slide into poverty and social dysfunction after 1950.⁴¹ With the exception of fleeting references to the neighborhood in the context of larger urban change, historians have all but ignored the area’s origins as early upper class commuter suburbs subjected to rapid change under the conditions of urban growth at the turn and beginning of the twentieth century.⁴² I hope to use the north shore’s religious buildings as a window into the life of religious congregations and the broader community over a forty-year period of flux and change.⁴³

⁴⁰ Lewis, 10.

⁴¹ See Todd Gitlin, *Uptown: Poor Whites in Chicago* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); Elizabeth Warren, *Chicago's Uptown: Public Policy, Neighborhood Decay, and Citizen Action in an Urban Community* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1979); Roger Guy, *From Diversity to Unity: Southern and Appalachian Migrants in Uptown Chicago, 1950-1970*.

⁴² Histories of Chicago’s suburban growth such as Harold Platt’s *The Electric City: Energy and the Growth of the Chicago Area, 1880-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) and Ann Durkin Keating’s *Building Chicago* (1988) incorporate information on the development of Edgewater by J. Cochrane, but do not enter into any deeper, specific analysis of the neighborhood’s genesis and growth. A rare exception, Scott A. Newman’s excellent website “Jazz Age Chicago” includes many references to Uptown’s buildings during the period of this project, but Newman focuses primarily on entertainment-oriented structures. Scott A. Newman, “Jazz Age Chicago: Urban Leisure from 1893-1945,” <http://chicago.urban-history.org>, accessed May 20, 2010.

⁴³ Peter Williams has observed, “[T]here is a dearth of work on what one might call “middle style” churches of the suburban era...Studies of the churches of what I like to call ‘middle Protestantism’—Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, northern Baptists—are sparse for the whole period past the Civil War.” Peter W. Williams, “The Built Environment of American Religion: The State of the Art,” <http://www.materialreligion.org/journal/archbiblio.html>, accessed August 22, 2007. For this reason, both the subject matter and periodization of this study break new ground in the study of sacred space. The period between 1890 and 1950 has been mostly neglected in previous studies of religious space, and there have been no comparative examinations of religious spaces that are united by geographical proximity rather than by stylistic unity or theological/denominational links.

Outline of the Project

Each of the chapters of this dissertation confronts a central question: what was the place of the church in the public life of the community during the time period under consideration? Each chapter also presents a different model for considering this question. The large number of churches established on the north shore between 1869 and 1932 has made it useful to focus on specific church experiences in each chapter, which are meant to represent broader trends both within the neighborhood and across the United States.

The first three chapters of the dissertation look at the place of churches during the north shore's suburban period. Chapter One concerns the role of the church as place-maker, drawing on theories about place identity to show how the Ravenswood Congregational Church recreated traditional conditions of church life in a small and cohesive commuter village between 1869 and 1889. Chapter Two looks at the church as a component of social identity and status, focusing on the comprehensive suburban development of Edgewater to show how the Church of the Atonement expressed the social identity and status aspirations of its wealthy but mobile residents from the late 1880's through the turn of the twentieth century. With the extension of the elevated train to the north shore in 1900 and 1908, more and more commercial development appeared on the landscape, leading churches to attempt to designate and regulate an approved moral geography by controlling behavior in public space, the subject of Chapter Three.

The final two chapters explore the ways that churches responded to the north shore's transition from suburbs to city neighborhoods after 1910. Chapter Four examines the effect of secular public life on religious space by looking at how churches adapted to urban culture by constructing monumental edifices and expanding their physical plants to

include space for social programs and recreation. Chapter Five concludes with an examination of the dynamics of religion in a pluralistic urban environment, where new technologies fractured the paradigm of the geographically central church. Churches became sub-communities in a crowded and competitive religious market. The emergence of radio religion in the early 1920's allowed for the disjunction of religion from place completely. The Conclusion reveals what happened to north shore communities and churches after 1932.

Significance of the Project

This interdisciplinary study of space, religion, and local history unites fields that have previously been studied mostly in isolation from one another. The integration of these fields allows for a new perspective on the crucial importance of place in the construction of personal, institutional, and community identity, particularly in relation to religion. A central contention of this dissertation is that place matters.

Because place matters, the history of local communities matters. The method of this dissertation, a focus on a specific geographic area, uses local sources to create a portrait of place that shows ordinary people interacting with the built environment in dynamic ways. By weaving the history of religious structures and congregational life into the context of a local landscape, the study advances a bottom-up means of examining both the influence exerted by religious groups on the public sphere and the ways that these groups responded to corresponding pressures from the secular world. From the other direction, the study attempts to tie this local story into larger debates and national trends by tracing the broader cultural context in which such negotiations of space

occurred.

One of the fundamental arguments of this dissertation is that nineteenth-century evangelical Protestant ideals and values governed not only social mores but also the organization of suburban space. Seminal studies of suburban space and suburban attitudes in the United States, such as Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* and John Stilgoe's *Borderland*, have neglected the role of local churches in creating and sustaining a sense of place in early suburban developments, but this study finds that suburbanites of the second half of the nineteenth century interpreted their communities through the lens of their religious and moral convictions. The incursion of urban forces on the suburban landscape constituted not only a physical revision of the built environment, but a challenge to the authority of local churches in the determination of the moral geography of the community.

From this perspective, challenges to the evangelical Protestant worldview after the turn of the twentieth century were not just theological, intellectual, and cultural. They were also spatial. By using space as a unifying focus of inquiry, this study looks to correct the tendency in urban history to study religion, commercial culture, and urbanization in ways that separate each from the other. The lens of religious space shows that urbanization did not entail a complete secularization of space, as has often been implied by urban historians, but rather a reorganization of spatial and social relationships around new roles for churches in the community and in wider culture. While religion and commercial forces did come into conflict over differing interpretations of the uses and meanings of public space, religion also appropriated strategies from commercial enterprises in its efforts to resonate in the increasingly complex urban marketplace.

The central theme of this study is the presence of religion on the landscape, but the narrative is shaped by the role that technology played in the transformation of physical space and social relationships. The filter of space draws attention to the ways that religious people have depended on technological innovation to advance their values at different points in time. Transportation was a primary engine of landscape transformation: it enabled both the establishment of churches on the fringes of Chicago and the changes to which these churches were later forced to respond. The nature of transportation available to people determined what a church's physical manifestation and role in the community would be. Some forms of technology—movies, for example—seemed to threaten the traditional place of churches in a local community, but other technologies, like electricity, radio, and the automobile, also presented churches with tools to respond to cultural change.

The cultural and spatial developments described in this dissertation presage even more dramatic shifts in the uses and meanings of religious space that began to occur in the latter half of the twentieth century: the expansion of suburban mega-churches that attract worshippers from long distances, the presence of religious outreach in multiple forms of mass media, the growth of ideological blocs disconnected from local issues in favor of national morals crusades. Because it describes the genesis of these features of the twenty-first century landscape, the study's relevance extends beyond the field of history into contemporary considerations about the importance of place in religion and community.

By focusing on the intersection of religion and space, this study emphasizes the adaptive nature of lived religion. In the specific instance of north shore Protestant

churches, the demands of space and place forced changes in the local Protestant worldview, transforming suburban churches that catered to homogeneous populations into eminently urban churches that met the city on its own terms. More broadly, the study invites a consideration of the fact that religion is not a static force in the wider life of the community, but changes with and in response to its physical surroundings.

**CHAPTER ONE:
“AT CHURCH NEXT SUNDAY”-
THE CHURCH AS PLACEMAKER**

*If I knew you and you knew me,
How little trouble there would be.
We pass each other on the street,
But just come out and let us meet.
At Church next Sunday....*

*We have an interest in our town,
The dear old place must not go down;
We want to push good things along.
And we can help some if we're strong
At Church next Sunday.¹*

* * *

In 1887, William and Amelia Pettitt brought a \$10,000 libel suit against the Reverend William A. Lloyd, their former pastor at the Ravenswood Congregational Church. At issue was the status of the Pettitts in the newly-issued Ravenswood Congregational Church Manual, which listed them as “excommunicated” from membership in the congregation. Both sides agreed that a personal conflict between the Pettitts and Reverend Lloyd had precipitated their exit from the Congregational Church in 1883, but the Pettitts denied that they had been formally excommunicated. The dispute spilled onto the pages of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, which reported that even though the couple now attended a different church, new residents of Ravenswood “turned a cold

¹ “At Church Next Sunday,” *The Lighted Cross*, March 1929, 16.

shoulder upon the Pettitts” after seeing the Manual. Their status as pariahs “grated upon Mr. Pettitt’s nerves so that at times he felt as if he must sell his home in Ravenswood and move elsewhere.” A friend advised that only an appearance in a court of law would settle the controversy, because the Pettitts’ reputation as upstanding Christians and moral citizens hung in the balance.²

This controversy reverberated throughout the community because Ravenswood residents exhibited what geographers would call a clear sense of place—“a shared feeling and a concept as much as a location and a physical environment”—a broadly accepted understanding of their community as a place with the best kind of people, in the nicest homes, with the most active populace and the highest moral standards.³ The editors of the *Ravenswood Citizen* attempted to sum up the qualities that distinguished Ravenswood, a residential community on Chicago’s north side, from other neighborhoods in the city:

The most striking characteristic of the community is that of its high moral standard....In no other large city in this country does there exist a more influential community of virile, aggressive Christian people....Churches, lodges, societies and clubs have welded the people together into a compact whole, promoting social relations which are unknown in other sections of Chicago.⁴

The Ravenswood Congregational Church had been essential to the formation of this sense of place in Ravenswood and the inference of excommunication from the church compromised the Pettitts’ acceptance within the community.

² “A Church Squabble,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 22, 1887, 6.

³ Yi-Fu Tuan, “Humanistic Geography,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (June 1976): 275.

⁴ *Ravenswood Citizen*, from Vivien Palmer Documents, Uptown, Vol. II (History of Ravenswood), document 19, 23.

The power of the Ravenswood Congregational Church emerged from its position as both a social and a physical institution in the life of the village. In the first years after Ravenswood's founding in 1869, the Congregational church was a lynchpin of community building, providing social cohesion and helping Ravenswood citizens construct a place identity that was predicated on middle class-ness, respectability, and religiosity. Residents viewed Ravenswood as an extension of the Christian home, and the church anchored this perception. In time, the Ravenswood Congregational Church erected a church structure that physically symbolized these domestic values, providing an emblem on the changing landscape that expressed its congregation's vision of the church and of the community. As Ravenswood grew and competing churches emerged, Ravenswood Congregational became less central to the social life of its residents, but the place identity shaped by the church and expressed in its structure continued to resonate in the public life of the Ravenswood community.

The Traditional Place of Churches in Community Life

Lewis Mumford observes: "The first germ of the city...is in the ceremonial meeting place that serves as the goal for pilgrimage."⁵ The privileged placement of sacred spaces in human settlements has been a recurring model of community building across continents and cultures, as well as across religious affiliations. In America, patterns of urban development carried over from early modern European models, and both Protestant and Roman Catholic colonists continued to build settlements around sacred structures.

⁵ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1961), 10.

Set at the center of a town, a religious building performs a critical role in creating the identity of the community. As a part of the landscape, its primary function is the symbolic demonstration of adherence to a certain set of beliefs. Daniel Bluestone observes that in colonial New England “[p]utting meeting houses in the center often expressed the assumption that community and congregation would coincide.”⁶ E. Brooks Holifield characterizes this model as the “comprehensive ideal,” in which churches provided all necessary services for a community: “The comprehensive ideal...required that a single congregation embrace a geographical region. It could not abide diversity.”⁷ In such contexts, meetinghouses came to serve not only religious purposes, but civic functions as well. The centrality of the meetinghouse in the physical arrangement of the village symbolized the dual rule of church and state and created a landscape that mirrored the values of the community.

Chicagoans of the nineteenth century adhered, to some degree, to this conventional way of thinking about religion and space. According to Bluestone, “Chicagoans viewed the religious landscape as a symbolic commentary on their culture, and church building proved central to demonstrating the city’s religious and moral commitments.”⁸ Through the first several decades of the city’s existence, prominent churches stood at the center of downtown Chicago, wall to wall with commercial structures and residences, with their spires rising above the low roofline of the city.

⁶ Daniel Bluestone, *Constructing Chicago* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 63.

⁷ See E. Brooks Holifield, “Toward a History of American Congregations,” in *American Congregations: New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations*, James P. Wind and James Welborn Lewis, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 33.

⁸ Bluestone, 63.

However, as the population of the city grew and its physical form expanded outward and upward, a separation of functions began to take effect in Chicago's public life. Civic, social, political, and economic concerns were no longer tied so intimately together as they had been during the city's infancy.

In terms of Chicago's religious landscape, this separation of functions expressed itself most significantly through a transformation in church location and context. Starting in the 1850's, church construction shifted from the center of the city to peripheral residential neighborhoods. The rising price of real estate in central Chicago played a role, as relocating congregations sold their downtown lots for escalating sums, but Bluestone argues that other factors were at work. As commerce began its exclusive reign over the masculine world of downtown Chicago, religion was swept aside, away from view, into the female world of the outlying residential neighborhood. Whereas ever-taller commercial buildings crowded the urban center, in residential neighborhoods the size and style of churches allowed them to stand out on the landscape, respected but no longer relevant to the concerns of downtown business.⁹

At the same time that religious structures began to disappear from downtown Chicago, commuter villages like Ravenswood, on the far periphery of the city, continued to follow older patterns of spatial distribution. Churches in small suburban communities thrived in circumstances that recreated traditional physical conditions of church placement. Indeed, "[i]n the suburban towns many churches regained a position in the center of the community, a position they had yielded in the larger city."¹⁰ Several factors

⁹ Ibid., 78-82.

¹⁰ Ibid., 103.

contributed to the re-elevation of religious structures in the hierarchy of the landscape.

First, like traditional villages, late nineteenth-century suburbs were geographically small, and churches built in their centers were within easy walking distance of every resident.

Second, the scale of residential and commercial building in suburbs and commuter villages was restrained, giving church buildings renewed visibility and prominence in the built environment. Finally, for communities lacking in other large public spaces, these suburban churches served multiple functions: as civic meetinghouse, lecture hall, or community auditorium.

Like all space, religious space has both geographical and social dimensions; churches were as central to the dynamics of social relations as to the configuration of the physical landscape.¹¹ Religion has historically played a key role in establishing social bonds and, given the voluntary basis for American religious participation, “one of the motivations for religious participation in the United States is the desire for friendly and culturally supportive associations.”¹² In the nineteenth century, Chicago’s churches served as a primary means of social contact among its residents. One pre-Fire Chicagoan

¹¹ The totality of this interrelatedness is best expressed by the eminent spatial theorist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre: “Space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations.” Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (USA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1991), 286.

¹² R. Stephen Warner, “Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 98, No. 5 (Mar., 1993): 1064, 1058. During the long frontier period, for example, with the constant generation of new and relatively isolated communities, many frontier settlements experienced social consolidation only after the establishment of churches. In new suburban settlements in the late nineteenth century, where similar situations of demographic mobility and community creation occurred, the entry into church membership made a similar “concrete social contribution [that] was to provide a means for hitherto complete strangers...to establish close personal relations quickly.” T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 214. For more rumination on the relationship between religion and social organizations, see Andrew M. Greeley, “Areas of Research on Religion and Social Organizations,” *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 23, no. 2 (1962): 99-112.

remembered: “without doubt the churches were the social centers of that period, for in those days whole families attended and were frankly proud of the fact.”¹³ In early suburbs, the accustomed centrality of church to social life created conditions of not only spatial, but social, primacy. Because so many working residents of the new villages commuted into the city for employment, the indigenous concerns of the village revolved largely around its social relations. For people whose habits included regular church attendance, the provision of frequent opportunities for social networking at church was crucial in determining communal identity.

Although the relationship is often so obvious that we are unable to see it, our spaces and our social relations pervade one another and shape each other, creating a vivid sensation of place, or place identity. Geographer J.B. Jackson defines this sense of place as “a lively awareness of the familiar environment, a ritual repetition, a sense of fellowship based on shared experience.”¹⁴ More simply, “[p]lace is where one is known and knows others.” A sense of place is crucial for human beings, because it creates a concrete identity and underpins a sense of well-being.¹⁵ While place identities are often contested, this study argues that the combination of spatial and social primacy experienced by the Ravenswood Congregational Church allowed for the creation of a

¹³ Francesca Falk Miller, *Across the Little Space, The Life Story of Dr. Louis Falk* (Chicago: The W.D. Bauman Company, 1933), 52. Accessed at Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/stream/acrosslittlespac00mill/acrosslittlespac00mill_djvu.txt, February 24, 2009.

¹⁴ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 159. All of these qualities might similarly be applied to religious practice!

¹⁵ David Butz, and John Eyles. “Reconceptualizing Senses of Place: Social Relations, Ideology and Ecology,” *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (1997): 2, 1-4. In their insightful review of the literature, Butz and Eyles fold the “sense of place” into the field of humanistic geography, which takes into account human beings’ “geographical behavior as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place.” Tuan, 266.

relatively uncontested place identity that was shared by a large proportion of Ravenswood's residents.¹⁶

The Early History of Ravenswood

Ravenswood sits between Lake Michigan and the north branch of the Chicago River, about five and a half miles north of downtown Chicago. Historically, migrating Native American tribes, most notably the Pottawatomie, camped here on the banks of the North Branch as they traveled north for the summer. Two well-traveled Indian trails passed through the swampy forest. To the east was the Green Bay Trail, one of the oldest Indian trails, which extended from Fort Dearborn north to Green Bay Country. To the west ran Little Fort Road, which led northwest to Waukegan, then called Little Fort.¹⁷ In 1837, the year that Chicago was incorporated as a city, the area gained its first white settlers when Conrad Sulzer and his wife, immigrants from Switzerland, bought 100 acres in the area.¹⁸ With the Sulzers, the long transformation from swamp to residential neighborhood commenced. Other farmers joined them, wresting vegetables and other small-scale produce from the sandy soil to sell at markets. This venture, known as “truck gardening” or “truck farming,” became increasingly profitable as Chicago's borders expanded. Celery was a major product of the truck farms, and in the latter half of the

¹⁶ As Dolores Hayden and Jeanne Halgren Kilde have observed, competing groups often contest place identity in a struggle for political and social power. Situations of contestation over place identity will be addressed in Chapters Three and Five.

¹⁷ Helen Zatterberg, *An Historical Sketch of Ravenswood and Lake View* (Chicago: Ravenswood-Lake View Historical Association, 1941), 1. Green Bay Road is now Clark Street; Little Fort Road is now Lincoln Avenue.

¹⁸ “Pioneer of Swampland Dies,” *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 11, 1912, 9.

nineteenth century the area would become known as one of the greatest celery-growing regions in the United States.¹⁹

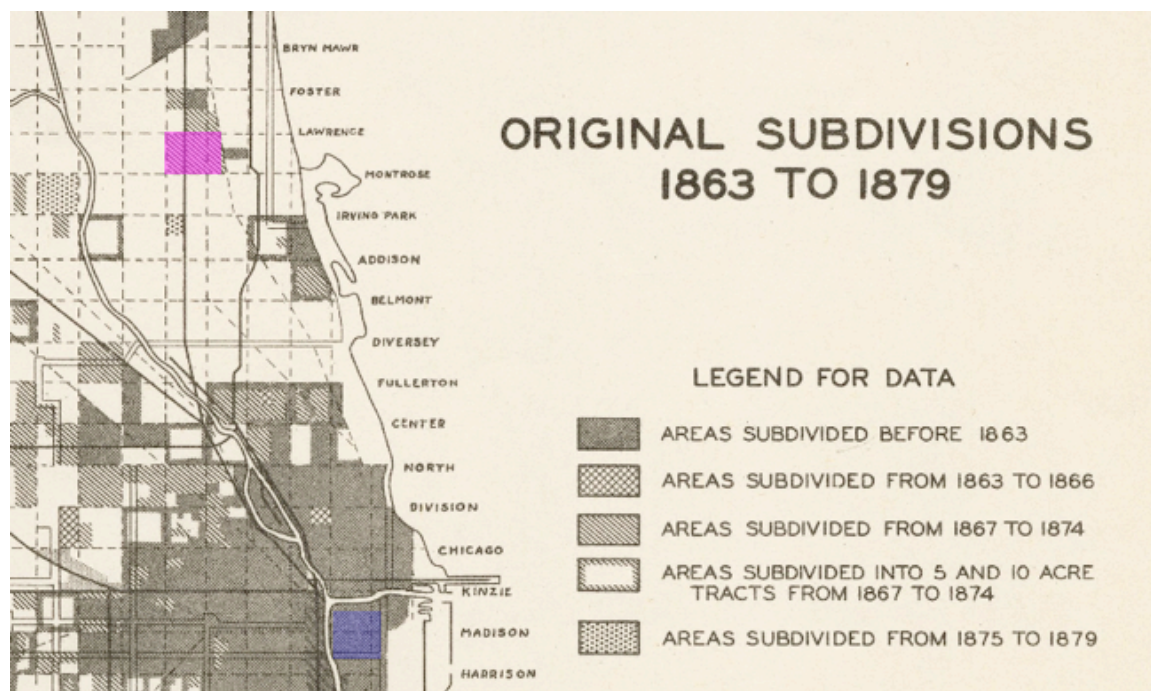


Figure 3. Ravenswood, situated five and a half miles north of the Loop, between Lake Michigan and the north branch of the Chicago River on the Chicago and North Western railroad line. Detail, map of Chicago showing original subdivisions, 1863 to 1879, prepared by Homer Hoyt, 1932. University of Chicago Library.

In 1854, the state of Illinois incorporated the broader township of Lake View, which extended from Fullerton Avenue, the north city limit of Chicago, north to Devon, and from Lake Michigan west to Western Avenue.²⁰ The population of Lake View was concentrated in the southern part of the township, and the incorporation did little to change the situation of people living in its northern reaches. Before the Civil War, Cedar Lawn, the tract that included the future village of Ravenswood, still consisted of trees and

¹⁹ Zatterberg, 5.

²⁰ Western Avenue was the western boundary of Chicago's city limits from 1851 to 1869.

marshland, with a population of only fifteen families living between Irving Park Road and the village of Evanston.²¹

By the late 1860's, however, this land grew more and more desirable to speculators and developers. For decades, the works of such writers as Andrew Jackson Downing had popularized the proto-suburban borderland movement, and innovations in transportation technology like the horse-car and railroad had made traveling over long distances both easier and more affordable.²² Class distinctions and social unrest also played a part. "As in other cities, the desire on the part of the middle and upper classes to separate themselves from the laboring population led to their movement to the periphery of the city and to the blossoming suburbs."²³ For these reasons, after 1868 the suburban movement began to gain serious momentum in Chicago. Although railroad construction had sparked interest in suburban expansion in the early 1850's, the financial panic of 1857 and then the outbreak of the Civil War interrupted speculation. As early as 1863, however, land values in Chicago began to rise and by 1869 the boom in real estate had extended to suburban lands.²⁴ In 1860, 8,000 people lived from three to five miles from Chicago's city center; ten years later, 55,000 people lived within the same radius.²⁵

²¹ The tract gained its first name from an evergreen nursery variously called Cedar Lawn or Wood's Nursery.

²² Downing's influential works include *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850). For more on the suburban ideal in the second half of the nineteenth century, see John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Ann Durkin Keating, *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

²³ Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 101-102.

²⁴ Homer Hoyt relates that "in 1871 one writer reports that every other man and every fourth woman in Chicago had an investment in [residential] lots." Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land*

150 to 160 feet and a twenty-foot alley in back. The land company carried out the planting of evergreens on every lot and street edge, but otherwise the lots remained unimproved.²⁸

In April of 1869, the lots were offered to the public, at relatively low prices that ranged between \$10 and \$25 per foot. The developers offered few amenities with a purchased lot and the streets remained unpaved. Buyers would contract the building of houses themselves. One early resident explained that the subdivided plots were somewhat inferior to the surrounding land: “There was quick sand in the subdivision limits and the section that was subdivided was not as good for farming as the land all around it.”²⁹ Despite a promised drainage system, the land was still wet. Another resident recalled, “It is somewhat difficult to understand why any one should have settled in Ravenswood at that time at all. In wet weather none of the streets were passable, the neighborhood being practically a swamp.”³⁰ Notwithstanding these indignities, the first lot sold for \$400 on June 16, 1869. By October 10, when the last lot was sold for \$2,500, “the wealthier class of citizens” had purchased every lot in the development, and about a dozen “elegant, tasteful residences” were inhabited.³¹

Transportation networks are the primary fuel of geographic expansion and the Chicago and North Western Rail Road was central to the existence and growth of Ravenswood. The single track, at-grade North Western train was the only straight

²⁸ “Ravenswood,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1869, 1.

²⁹ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 17, 1-2.

³⁰ Ibid., doc. 12, 6.

³¹ Everett Chamberlin, *Chicago and Its Suburbs* (Chicago: T.A. Hungerford & Co., 1874), 370; “Ravenswood,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 1869, 1; Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 39, 2.

connection between Ravenswood and Chicago, running three trains a day each way.³²

Ravenswood residents labeled the three morning trains: first for the Workers, second for the Clerks, and third for the Shirks and Shoppers. In the early years of the village, all food supplies came from Chicago: “If your father forgot the butter or the meat on Saturday night, you borrowed from your neighbors, or went without until Monday night.”³³ This engine of mobility made the village possible and the only public buildings to predate the Ravenswood church and school were a depot and post office established next to the tracks by the Land Company in the spring of 1869.

The Founding of the First Church of Ravenswood

Daniel Bluestone observes that in the late nineteenth century, Chicagoans were more apt to judge ethical uprightness by material rather than behavioral standards. Because contemporaries gauged status and respectability on whether a community boasted a church and by how active that church was, developments that catered to the middle and upper middle-class buyers’ market considered the construction of a church a necessity.³⁴ Aside from a rudimentary schoolhouse constructed in 1869, the Ravenswood Land Company did not have a great variety of physical amenities of which to boast. Its directors were aware that to attract the type of stable, well-to-do residents who would make their development a success, they would have to provide the types of institutions

³² The only other way to get from Chicago to Ravenswood was to take the streetcar to its terminus at Diversey, then walk the rest of the way up Green Bay Road, an unlit wagon road with no sidewalks.

³³ Fannie Knight Young, “The Romance of Ravenswood,” *The Lighted Cross*, March 1930, 12.

³⁴ Bluestone, 63; Perry R. Duis, *Challenging Chicago: Coping with Everyday Life, 1837-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 70-71.

that symbolize and nurture these qualities. In other words, “[t]he Ravenswood Land Company recognized that it would be good business to have a church.”³⁵ This was a calculated decision on the part of the village developers. A church would draw more “desirable” people to Ravenswood and more desirable people would raise property values.

The motivation was clear, but the organization of a congregation and construction of a church building proved to be more complicated. The Ravenswood Land Company made available a single lot at the northeast corner of Sulzer Road and Commercial Street, one block east of the Chicago and North Western tracks and in the center of the Ravenswood development.³⁶ The company proposed to donate the lot to any denomination that could demonstrate the ability to build and maintain a church structure without falling into debt.³⁷ This stipulation proved the undoing of several nascent congregations. Presbyterians in Ravenswood organized a congregation first and they began construction of a log church building but could not raise the requisite funds to continue the project.³⁸ The Episcopalians failed to raise the funds as well and, for reasons unknown, the Methodists refused the offer.³⁹ The plain structure begun by the Presbyterians sat empty and unfinished.

³⁵ Mrs. A.E. Hoyt, “Fiftieth Anniversary of Ravenswood CC Sunday School Historical Sketch.” Ravenswood Congregational Church collection, Sulzer Regional Library, Box 2, folder 9.

³⁶ Now Montrose and Hermitage Avenues.

³⁷ Reverend J. Morrison Thomas correspondence, RCC collection, Sulzer Library, Box 1, folder 15; Zatterberg, 14; Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 19, 22.

³⁸ “Suburban (Ravenswood—Church Dedication),” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 12, 1885, 2.

³⁹ Frank L. Stevenson, *Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Chicago, 1902-1937: A Story of the Church* (Chicago: Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Historical Committee, 1939), 4-5.

At this time, the Reverend William Artemus Lloyd entered the picture. Born in Massachusetts in 1832 to a well-established New England family that boasted Mayflower antecedents, Lloyd had enjoyed a somewhat peripatetic existence before he settled in Ravenswood. He began teaching school in New York state at the age of sixteen, graduated as the valedictorian of his class from Hinsdale Academy in 1854, and went on to Williams College in Massachusetts, where he befriended and roomed with James Garfield, the future President of the United States. After graduating from Williams College in 1858, Lloyd attended Western Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, but left after a short time, disaffected with the extreme Calvinist teachings of the school. From there, he relocated to Memphis, Tennessee, to teach during the 1858-1859 school year, but moved again, feeling alienated and endangered by the secession spirit then brewing in that state. Lloyd came to Illinois and received his license to preach from the Elgin Congregational Association. Over the ensuing decade, he served as pastor to five congregations in Illinois and Wisconsin. By 1869, Lloyd had determined to devote himself to mission work in Chicago and moved his family to Ravenswood.⁴⁰

Lloyd chose Ravenswood because it stood in the center of a broad unchurched swath of land. According to his biographer, Lloyd saw Ravenswood as “the central point in a territory nine miles long and five miles wide, extending from Fullerton avenue, Chicago, to Evanston, containing ten thousand inhabitants but having no Protestant

⁴⁰ Josiah Seymour Currey, *Chicago: Its History and Its Builders, a Century of Marvelous Growth* (Chicago: The S. J. Clark Publishing Company, 1912), 723-725. Currey relates an interesting anecdote from Rev. Lloyd’s wandering years: “In traveling, Rev. Mr. Lloyd spend a night and a day with Abraham Lincoln during his campaign of debates with Stephen A. Douglas, which was always a pleasant memory.” Ibid., 727.

church.”⁴¹ Lloyd bought a residential lot and built a house at Commercial and Sunnyside, two blocks north of the lot containing the unfinished church. The state of this building must have perked his interest, as the minister had just finished steering a successful church construction project at his latest pastorate, the Congregational Church of Morris, Illinois.⁴² At the behest of the land company, Lloyd undertook the organization of a church out of the remains of the failed Presbyterian congregation. With only seven members, including his wife Helen, Lloyd launched a Congregational church on April 10, 1869.⁴³ The tiny congregation christened their church the First Church of Ravenswood, but the name belies the true scope of its reach: this was the first Protestant church between Diversey Avenue and the village of Evanston.

Reverend Lloyd’s congregation purchased the partial church structure at Sulzer and Commercial immediately. Because the main part of the building was still unfinished, until Lloyd secured a loan from the Chicago City Mission Society to complete it, the congregation held services in a lecture room attached to the east wall of the church.⁴⁴ In 1870, the New England Congregational Union granted the Ravenswood church a charter and formally named Reverend Lloyd pastor of the new congregation. His salary was \$125 a month, an income that Lloyd supplemented with work for his brother’s Chicago publishing house, Louis Lloyd and Company.⁴⁵ That year, the church inaugurated its

⁴¹ Ibid., 725.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 19, 22; Zatterberg, 14; The original members of the First Church of Ravenswood were: Rev. William A. Lloyd and his wife Helen M. Lloyd; William H. and Maria C. Hedges; A.W. Allen and wife (or J.H. and Jennie Wright); Mrs. Jane Sulzer Bowen, and C.W. Clark.

⁴⁴ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 1, 3.

⁴⁵ Currey, 726.

regular Sunday service schedule: morning service at 10:30 a.m. and evening service at 7:30 p.m., a program that would remain in place until 1916.⁴⁶

The original log church structure, built for immediate needs, sufficed for the tiny congregation's purposes until 1873, at which point Ravenswood began to grow steadily. Growth of the subdivision had slowed somewhat in the aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, but within two years the real estate business picked up again. The ensuing population growth propelled residents to organize themselves into a formalized village and it prompted the First Church of Ravenswood to expand its quarters as well.⁴⁷ The church replaced its original building with a larger, two-part frame structure capped with a pitched roof. Five tall lancet windows, traditional markers of Gothic church design, ran evenly along the north and south facades of the main structure, while the front, west façade boasted a large pointed-arch window surmounted by a small circular one.⁴⁸ A

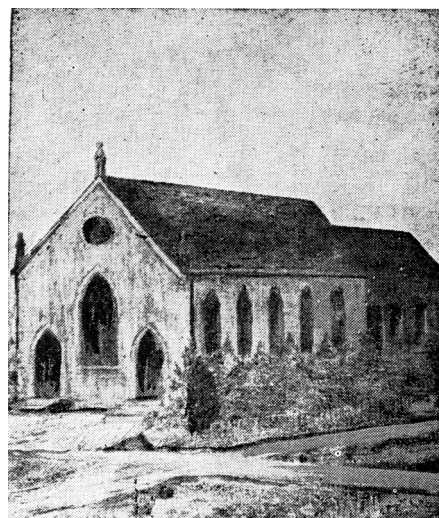


Figure 5. The 1873 Ravenswood Congregational Church structure. Ravenswood Congregational Church records.

⁴⁶ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 19, 22.

⁴⁷ "Suburban News," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 11, 1873, 2.

⁴⁸ In the mid-nineteenth century, the Gothic Revival style—due to a confluence of forces—attained the status of an hegemonic aesthetic standard for churches across the Protestant denominational spectrum in the United States. See Phoebe Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968); Calder Loth and Julius Trousdale Sadler, Jr., *The Only Proper Style: Gothic Architecture in America* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975); and Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 56-83. By the early 1870's, the mid-century fad for Gothic Revival had waned, but lived on in vernacular structures that adapted Gothic elements, such as pointed-arch windows, to traditional wood frame buildings. In Ravenswood, such details might be seen as evidence of a small, modestly endowed congregation attempting to fit out its church in "the only proper style."

smaller room, used as a lecture room and Sunday School, abutted the east wall of the main structure. The church dedicated its new building on August 24, 1873, with a dedicatory sermon delivered by the Reverend Dr. Charles Downes Helmer, the liberal pastor of the more established Union Park Church on Chicago's West Side. Indicating at least a modicum of downtown interest in the new church up north, a Chicago newspaper informed readers of transportation options from the city to Ravenswood for the dedication.

To the outside world, the success of the church's building program served as shorthand for an up-and-coming, stable community. In May, 1873, the *Chicago Times* reported, "Ravenswood has sprung up within the past three years. It has a flourishing church and Sunday School, and is an energetic and thriving neighborhood."⁴⁹ Three months later, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* observed, "Until recently, Lake View has been wholly dependent on this city for literary, church, and high school privileges, and its ready railroad and street-car facilities of access to the city have helped to prolong this state of dependence."⁵⁰ Now, this dependence was coming to an end and the citizens of Ravenswood began to craft an independent identity for the village.

In large part, the homogeneity of the residents shaped the emerging identity of Ravenswood.⁵¹ Most of its residents were transplanted New Englanders and nearly all

⁴⁹ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 39, 1. (*Chicago Times*, May 1873)

⁵⁰ "Lake View," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 24, 1873, 16.

⁵¹ Ann Durkin Keating observes that the patterns of suburban expansion followed by Chicago developers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries enforced demographic homogeneity within suburbs. Improvements carried out by land companies varied according to the economic strata at which the development was aimed, thus segregating suburbs by income. Keating, *Building Chicago*, Chapter Four. Chapter Two of this dissertation examines Edgewater, a suburb characterized by a high number of improvements for upper-class buyers.

were native-born Americans. A resident related, “the people of Ravenswood...are of the distinctly American type with characteristics unaffected by foreigners.”⁵² Based on the commuting patterns of the male residents, a large majority of Ravenswood families were headed by upper middle-class businessmen and white-collar workers employed in Chicago.⁵³ Another early resident corroborates this assumption: “The original owners of land in the first years that I lived there all worked downtown in offices. The North Western trains were crowded with men going to work from the north shore suburbs.”⁵⁴ Finally, Ravenswood was predominantly Protestant. In the first decade and a half of the suburb’s existence, Ravenswood residents founded only three churches: Congregational, Methodist, and Episcopal.

The Church Network

The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes that human territory “is not bounded space but a network of paths and places.”⁵⁵ The habits of daily life, particularly in a walking community the size of Ravenswood, may be traced out over this network of paths and places. Seeing territory in this way, social relationships that bind a community together become an interlocking web, bringing people together at times and in places of particular

⁵² Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 19, 23. Ironically, one of the first residents of the Ravenswood tract was an African American who was displaced by the creation of the Ravenswood development: “The only other house in that section was the one owned by John Whitehead. He was a colored slave who ran away from the south during the Civil War, so the story goes, and was given that land for as long as he wanted to use it. He had two sons, Fred and Joe, and I don’t know how many other children. They were the only colored family in Ravenswood but when the land on the street began selling he was pushed out.” Palmer, Uptown II doc. 8, 1.

⁵³ “Suburban News,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 11, 1873, 2.

⁵⁴ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 36, 4.

⁵⁵ Tuan, 269.

importance in the life of the community. For Ravenswood, one node in this network was the daily commute to Chicago.⁵⁶ In 1869, only one resident took the Chicago and North Western train to Chicago each day; by 1874, seventy-five men commuted both ways every weekday.⁵⁷ Occasionally, their wives rode the train downtown to shop at the department stores in the Loop. The importance of the train to the life of the community made the station platform a place for news and gossip: “Having no telephone one heard about the affairs of the neighborhood while one waited for trains.”⁵⁸ These casual daily exchanges of information strengthened social bonds.

The other main habit for Ravenswood residents, far more consciously meaningful to them, was church. It certainly helped that the First Church of Ravenswood was the only game in town. A resident remembered, “In those first years this was the only church in Ravenswood, and all creeds worshipped amicably here,--Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian.”⁵⁹ In 1874, a *Chicago Daily Tribune* editorial held up this model of cooperation as an example to all, opining against the tendency in small towns and suburbs to set up multiple churches so that each denomination might be represented. With only a handful of members, such a church “drags out a sickly existence.” Instead,

when a suburb is small, and one denomination has already obtained a foothold, other churches shall retire and give up the field, until its growth in population shall warrant churches of other denominations. In this way the Congregationalists have taken possession of Ravenswood, for instance, and the people of other denominations who are there are advised to go to the Congregational Church,

⁵⁶ Two other important nodes in Ravenswood were the Ravenswood School and Lake View High School, but an examination of the place of schools in the community requires an entire study unto itself.

⁵⁷ Everett Chamberlin, *Chicago and Its Suburbs* (Chicago: T.A. Hungerford & Co., 1874), 370.

⁵⁸ Fannie Knight Young, “The Romance of Ravenswood,” 12.

⁵⁹ “The Old Church,” *The Lighted Cross*, June 1929, 16.

until such time as a church may be organized representing more perfectly their views, and which will be likely to be self-sustaining.⁶⁰

The willingness of Ravenswood's other denominational adherents to attend non-sectarian services conducted by Reverend Lloyd created a central clearinghouse of activity.

Ravenswood Congregational Church was, for a decade, one of the primary places in Ravenswood, from which and to which many paths proceeded and overlapped, resulting in a strengthening of social relationships and of place identity. Sundays, in particular, revolved around church:

Church began at 10:30, and everyone in town went to church. Sunday School began at twelve o'clock, and it was a lively place....After church everyone went home to dinner....in my young days Sunday dinner was a big ceremony....Then all old patriarchs took 'forty-winks', while all the young people took a...Sunday walk, to the river, woods, or the lake, or to one of the cemeteries. And then everyone came home, with rosy cheeks and good appetites for tea! And then everyone went to church again.⁶¹

Church was not just a Sunday activity. On Monday nights, the church hosted the Young People's Prayer Meeting; the Ladies Prayer Meeting met on Friday afternoons. Wednesday nights saw the midweek General Prayer Meeting for the entire church. Normal Bible Class took place on Saturday evenings.⁶² Other nights were occupied with lectures or club meetings at the church. A resident recalled, "The seven days of the week were filled with appointments, and around the Church revolved an orderly, neighborly, attractive and wholesome social life....They all met here on Sundays, and at other times enjoyed the church suppers and church entertainments without thought of creed, beliefs,

⁶⁰ "Common Sense in Religion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 31, 1874, 6.

⁶¹ "The Old Church," *The Lighted Cross*, March 1929, 14-15.

⁶² "Ravenswood," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 17, 1875, 5.

or dogmas.”⁶³ Other residents elaborated: “the community was like one large family. Everybody, man, woman and child, went to everything”; “Everyone...knew everyone else. We went to church a lot. Everyone did.”⁶⁴

Clubs formed through the auspices of the church, particularly women’s groups, and they met frequently at the church to carry out their programs.⁶⁵ The Ladies Social Society, organized in 1871, “contributed largely to the social well being of the Church and community.”⁶⁶ This society held receptions and bazaars at the church, raising \$811 in 1873 to help pay for the new church building. Each June, the Ladies Society put on an Annual Strawberry and Ice-Cream Festival, charging fifteen cents for food and providing entertainment in the form of songs and recitations.⁶⁷ Other women’s groups created links to broader organizations. Organized out of the Ravenswood Congregational Church in the 1870’s, the Ravenswood Women’s Christian Temperance Union had “among its membership...many of the most prominent ladies of the town.”⁶⁸ This group sponsored lectures at the church by well-known guests, including at least two by Evanston native Frances Willard, the leader of the international WCTU movement.⁶⁹

⁶³ “The Old Church,” *The Lighted Cross*, June 1929, 16.

⁶⁴ Young, 13; Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 6, 1.

⁶⁵ Daniel Bluestone argues that the removal of churches to the outlying residential areas of Chicago contributed to the “feminization of urban religion.” Bluestone, 79. Certainly, women’s deep and varied participation in church affairs became a primary engine of these churches, both socially and financially.

⁶⁶ *Manual of the First Congregational Church and Society of Ravenswood, Illinois* (Chicago: Culver, Page, Hoyne, and Co., 1876), 16. The involvement of women in raising money to erect church structures is consistent over time and denominational affiliation, and their contributions are marked.

⁶⁷ “The Old Church,” *The Lighted Cross*, June 1929, 16.

⁶⁸ Goodspeed and Healy, 267.

⁶⁹ “Suburban,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 1, 1884, 8; “Ravenswood,” May 13, 1887, 5.

The social contacts initiated at church and through church functions extended into the public life of the Ravenswood community. The *Chicago Times* reported that “[l]adies of the [Ravenswood] church hold regular church sociables at the homes of members every two weeks.”⁷⁰ The Ladies’ Society also hosted functions in public venues, sponsoring a musical and dramatic benefit at the Lake View High School in 1874 that starred many of the church’s young people.⁷¹ Church picnics on the open prairie or at the lake were a regular part of Ravenswood life in the summertime.

Social contacts were reinforced through the custom of visiting. One resident recalled, “About every family called on every other family several times a year.”⁷² One of these occasions was New Year’s Day, when Ravenswood maintained a tradition of visits throughout the community. Women, aided by friends and daughters, would host all-day receptions and the men of the community passed from reception to reception throughout the day, until everyone met up together at one party in the evening. In 1875, of the twenty-four households “receiving” visitors that day, at least eighteen of them had a hostess who was a member of the Ravenswood Congregational Church.⁷³

⁷⁰ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 39, 2. (*Chicago Times*, Oct. 10, 1881)

⁷¹ “Our Suburbs,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 15, 1874, 4.

⁷² Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 19, 21.

⁷³ “Other Suburbs,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 3, 1875, 5; *Ravenswood Congregational Church Manual, 1876*, “Church Membership,” (Chicago: Ravenswood Congregational Church, 1876), 17. I arrived at this number by comparing the *Tribune*’s list of women holding receptions from with the church membership rolls for 1876. While not all of the women giving receptions are listed as members, it is worth keeping in mind that, at this time, church membership and church attendance were two entirely different things. A person might attend the church each week, but—perhaps as a result of a pre-existing denominational affiliation—choose not to become a member. The number of women who attended the Congregational Church might, therefore, easily exceed eighteen. As for the women who did not attend the Congregational Church in Ravenswood, some might have attended Catholic churches further away; some may even have gone as far as Evanston or Lake View to attend a Methodist, Episcopal, or Presbyterian church. More research would be required to make any definitive statements on this issue.

In keeping with the extreme sociability encouraged by the proliferation of church activities and informal visiting, Ravenswood was a joiners' haven, with a plethora of clubs, including the Ravenswood Literary Society, the Ravenswood Historical Society, the Ravenswood Dramatic Society, the Young People's Club, and the Pleasant Hours Social Club, which held public receptions every other Friday night during the winter months. Church members were on the rolls of all of these groups and the church building



Figure 6. *The Ravenswood Dramatic Society, c. 1880's. RCC records.*

played host to a wide variety of meetings and lectures sponsored by them. Speakers delivered talks for the Ravenswood Literary Society in the audience room of the church, and these talks were open to the broader public.⁷⁴ The Ravenswood Historical Society, of which Reverend Lloyd and R.J. Bennett, a

pillar of the church, were both trustees, held its annual presentation exercises within the church.⁷⁵ The church also hosted concerts, music programs and tableaux, and plays put on by such groups as the Young People's Missionary Society.⁷⁶

The constant round of social activities, centered at the church and involving social networks solidified at the church, consolidated the feeling of camaraderie that marked its citizens' understandings of Ravenswood. Certainly, the homogeneity of its residents facilitated this process; "[t]he uniformity of the type of people throughout the district may

⁷⁴ "Notes from the Suburbs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1873, 3.

⁷⁵ "Suburban," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 1, 1882, 8

⁷⁶ "The Old Church," *The Lighted Cross*, June 1929, 17.

have made the organization of such groups easier.”⁷⁷ The qualities that united Ravenswood’s citizens—native born, middle- and upper-middle class, and Protestant—ensured a degree of hegemonic cooperation and coexistence around central social organizations that would have been unthinkable in more heterogeneous parts of Chicago proper.

This tight knit cohesion created among neighbors a sense that their lovely community was the pinnacle of social achievement: “The first citizens had an ideal. They wanted to make Ravenswood the best town on earth.”⁷⁸ In their own eyes, they succeeded. One resident later reminisced: “The first ten years I lived in Ravenswood it was a little paradise; everybody knew everybody else.”⁷⁹ Another resident described Ravenswood during this period:

In the middle seventies our quiet little village of mid-Victorian houses set against a background of lacelike evergreens, shaded by overhanging elms and maples, was becoming known as a pleasant and desirable place in which to live....Men bought property there, built their little villas, surrounded them with gay flower gardens, kept bees, grew corn and tomatoes and rhubarb, and brought up groups of charming children in this genial atmosphere.⁸⁰

Notwithstanding the gloss of nostalgia, this place identity in some ways reproduced the original Puritan vision of the new Eden, a garden of pastoral perfection safe from the non-elect, removed from the deleterious influences of the city, a place where vice was prohibited.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 10, 2.

⁷⁸ “The Old Church,” *The Lighted Cross*, June 1929, 18.

⁷⁹ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 14, 1.

⁸⁰ “The Old Church,” *The Lighted Cross*, May 1931, 23.

⁸¹ This idea comes from Rhys H. Williams, “Review Essay: Religion, Community, and Place: Locating the Transcendent,” *Religion and American Culture* 12, no. 2 (2002): 258; Butz and Eyles explain

It took a great degree of demographic homogeneity to perpetuate this vision of village as Eden. Stephen Warner observes that the Protestant congregational form, predicated on like-mindedness and a relative homogeneity of ideals—as contrasted to the Roman Catholic parish model, which is based on geography and a sense of turf—generally tends to encourage a less place-based expression of religious ideals.⁸² But when only one congregational meetinghouse existed within a village like Ravenswood, the congregation’s understanding of itself tended to take on certain place-based qualities of the parish. While this situation lasted, social identification overlapped with turf consciousness to produce an exceedingly strong hegemony of place identity centered on the church.

The Establishment of Other Churches

With the swift and steady growth of Ravenswood, the monopoly held by the Congregational church on spiritual and social energies weakened. By the end of 1874, the congregation of Ravenswood Congregational had already outgrown its year-old church building. The *Daily Tribune* commented after the Christmas celebrations that year: “The church when built was thought to be ample enough to accommodate the residents for a number of years to come, but the people must either keep away from Ravenswood or

this process: “The conjoining of people and places leads to the latter’s constitution as matrices of symbols which comprise the ideological component of community and place....Matrices of symbols pertaining to places can engender a sense of belonging or identity; individuals identify with a place, and feel they belong to it, because they share social values and sentiments with others in that place. The place comes to represent a set of shared values.” Butz and Eyles, 4.

⁸² R. Stephen Warner, “Building Religious Communities at the Turn of the Century,” in Lowell Livezey, *Public Religion and Urban Transformation: Faith in the City* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 303-305.

provide more churches, for the church was filled to its utmost capacity.”⁸³ With the growing population came a greater diversity of denominational identification.

Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians all belonged to the Congregational church until their respective numbers reached a critical mass, but “[a]s soon as enough members of another denomination arrived they broke away and formed their own church.”⁸⁴

The first split came in 1872, when Malcolm MacDowell, Sr., whose daughter Mary MacDowell would become famous as the head of the University of Chicago settlement house, founded a Methodist Sunday School. Only a handful of people attended the first meetings, but within a year, forty-three members founded the Ravenswood Methodist Society. Although this society did not attain a charter for the creation of the Ravenswood Methodist Church until 1880, from the beginning, the Methodists were keen to build a church building that would formalize their presence in the community: “All were unanimous in their desire to organize a church and provide a suitable house of worship.”⁸⁵

Like the original Congregationalist structure, the Methodists’ first building was an improvised and economical affair. After the 1871 fire destroyed the downtown church belonging to the First Methodist Church of Chicago, First Methodist erected a small wood frame building at the corner of Clark and Harrison to serve as a temporary house of worship while the congregation built a larger, permanent building. Upon the completion of this larger structure in 1873, First Methodist donated the frame building to the

⁸³ “Other Suburbs,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 3, 1875, 5.

⁸⁴ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 1, 3.

⁸⁵ Elsie Swartz, *A Historical Sketch of One Hundred Years of Service: Ravenswood United Methodist Church* (Chicago: Ravenswood United Methodist Church, 1972), 1.

Ravenswood Methodist Society, on the condition that the Ravenswood Methodists would pay for its transport north. The son-in-law of a church founder had offered the use of a free lot in Ravenswood, so the Methodists placed the frame church on a raft and floated it up the lakeshore to Wilson Avenue, where they unloaded the structure and conveyed it on rollers two miles west to Ravenswood. The moving process incurred significant damages on the building, which required repair, but the Methodist church was dedicated in March, 1873. It stood here, at Sunnyside and Winchester, until 1879, when it was moved again, this time three blocks east.⁸⁶

The existence of the Methodist church does not seem to have created a marked schism in the social life of the Ravenswood community. Until 1883, the Methodists shared their pastor with a congregation in Wilmette, so the size and power of the Methodist church must have posed little competition to the larger, more established Congregational church. As late as 1880, the Ravenswood Congregational Church was still known by many simply as “Ravenswood Church.”⁸⁷ Nevertheless, by this time it seems that the population of Ravenswood was already expanding beyond the confines of the church’s social grasp, spurring an outreach campaign that extended into the streets of the community. In the summer of 1880, the Pastoral Committee of the Congregational church circulated a letter commissioning male members of the church to make home visits to the families of all members of the church, as well as “strangers” who did not

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ James Baird McClure, *Stories and Sketches of Chicago: An Interesting, Entertaining, and Instructive Sketch History of the Wonderful City "By the Sea"* (Rhodes & McClure, 1880), 188.

attend services.⁸⁸ Each member took responsibility for a specific canvassing territory and the committee exhorted canvassers to make a special effort toward newcomers. In 1882, when Ravenswood's Episcopalians organized a mission that they called All Saints, the grip of Ravenswood Congregational on the community loosened further.

Overall, however, the evidence supports the conclusion that cooperation between denominations generally prevailed after the Methodists and Episcopalians formed their own churches. One resident remembered: "In Ravenswood proper we had as fine a community spirit as is ever possible. Although there was a difference of opinion on religion, we all got together at other times."⁸⁹ This cooperation carried over into other aspects of village life. Another resident explained how compromise was achieved: "There were only three members on the School Board and so if two were Methodists one year, then the next year the majority had to be Congregationalists."⁹⁰ The narrow spectrum of theological convictions among residents and the previous sociability enjoyed as members of the Congregational church contributed to this cooperative frame of mind.

Now with three churches, "Ravenswood was the educational and religious center for the territory between the lake and the river and Belmont and Rose Hill. This drew a most desirable class of people and land values increased."⁹¹ This effect was exactly what the Ravenswood Land Company shareholders had envisioned. By the end of the 1870's, lots in this reputable suburb began to skyrocket in cost. What the earliest settlers bought

⁸⁸ Pastoral Committee correspondence, June 21, 1880, RCC collection, Sulzer Regional Library, Box 2, folder 25.

⁸⁹ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 17, 3-4.

⁹⁰ Ibid., doc. 1, 3.

⁹¹ Young, 2.

for \$1.25 an acre in 1845 shot to \$500 an acre in 1869, the year it was purchased by the Ravenswood Land Company. In 1870, the company resold the land starting at an appreciated price of \$400 and up for a quarter of an acre and, by 1881, with the population of Ravenswood nearing 500, the same quarter acres were selling for between \$800 and \$1,200.⁹²

In 1884, in keeping with this steady expansion, Ravenswood experienced a small building boom in public structures, all located on Commercial Street. All Saints, the recently-established Episcopal mission, had been using the Methodists' church on Sunday afternoons, but in 1883 they commissioned the construction of a small church two blocks north of Ravenswood Congregational at Commercial and Wilson Avenue. Architect John C. Cochran designed a quaint Stick Style church that was completed by Easter of 1884. Later in the year, the Ravenswood Historical Society embarked on a construction project of its own; under the leadership of President R.J. Bennett, the group collected subscriptions to fund a two-story, brick Library Hall. Residents deemed Library Hall, situated kitty-corner from the Congregational church on the southwest corner of Commercial and Sulzer, "the first ambitious public building in Ravenswood." On the first floor it held one of the few lending libraries in the entire region, with a collection of more than a thousand books, while the second floor contained a commodious 500-seat assembly hall with kitchen facilities.⁹³

Competition with these two structures may have spurred the Ravenswood Congregational church to consider expanding and remodeling the 1873 church. With the

⁹² Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 39, 4; "The Census," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 25, 1880.

⁹³ "The Old Church," *The Lighted Cross*, Jan. 1930, 10; "Suburban," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 5, 1884, 5.

appearance of Library Hall and its substantial facilities for public assembly, the lecture room at the Congregational Church held less attraction for the hosting of secular public gatherings. In addition, while the Methodists' recycled structure did not pose much of a threat to the congregation's self-conception, the lovely new Episcopal church raised the bar for church architecture in the community. In January of 1884, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted, "The Congregational Society will soon enlarge the church building as it is impossible at present to accommodate all those who apply for seats."⁹⁴ On January 31, at a supper given by Mr. and Mrs. R.J. Bennett, church leaders discussed the enlargement of the church and definitive plans for the project emerged.⁹⁵

The 1885 Ravenswood Congregational Church

Geographers Kevin Blake and Jeffrey Smith coined the term "structure of permanence" to characterize elements of the built environment that serve as lasting monuments to the era that produced them: "A construct at once architectural, emotional, and social, the structure of permanence is a material expression grounded in local landscape and integral to cultural identity. Such structures shape place attachment because of what they represent, and they can serve as powerful sources of memory."⁹⁶ Structures of permanence are open to modification or redefinition over time, but they engrave onto the landscape an ever-present reminder of the cultural era of their production: "Structures of permanence put down foundations in the psyche of place and

⁹⁴ "Suburban," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 26, 1884, 8.

⁹⁵ "The Old Church," *The Lighted Cross*, August 1929, 19.

⁹⁶ Kevin S. Blake, and Jeffrey S. Smith, "Pueblo Mission Churches as Symbols of Permanence and Identity," *Geographical Review* 90, no. 3 (2000), 359.

become icons of local culture.”⁹⁷ No better example of a structure of permanence may be found in Chicago than the pre-Fire Water Tower, once the tallest structure in the city, now dwarfed by the skyscrapers that line North Michigan Avenue.

Blake and Smith designate churches “prime examples” of structures of permanence, because they play a significant part in defining place identity. Not all churches are structures of permanence, however. In their formative years, congregations often cycle through a series of buildings as their numbers and missions expand.⁹⁸ Ravenswood Congregational Church followed a pattern of church growth that one sees repeated again and again. Its first home was a utilitarian structure, with little ornament, ostentation, or attention to design. The church quickly outgrew this first structure, and erected a second building with some semblance of style and design, which featured Gothic detailing on the windows. Finally, at the moment of congregational maturity, the church erected the structure that would serve it through the rest of its existence—a structure of permanence. This final structure, built with fewer financial constraints and supported by a healthy, active congregation, is most likely to reflect the values and self-perception of a congregation at the height of its influence, as well as include spatial provisions for the full spectrum of congregational uses and needs.

The Ravenswood Congregational Church’s 1885 building emerged at the tail end of a period of redefinition for Congregational meetinghouses. Traditional Puritan meetinghouses, used for civic and religious assemblies and community gatherings, were

⁹⁷ Ibid., 360.

⁹⁸ Not always, however. Many churches begin worship in a congregant’s home or in an available commercial space prior to erecting their first church structure. Alternatively, as both All Saints Episcopal Church in Ravenswood and the Edgewater’s Church of the Atonement in Chapter Two demonstrate, some congregations with wealth and resources erected structures of permanence almost immediately.

extreme in their simplicity: a rectangular auditorium, with the pulpit centered at the far end of the room opposite the front entrance door, and a plain exterior featuring a pitched roof. Excepting for the Gothic detailing of the windows, the 1873 Ravenswood Congregational Church reproduced this design program almost exactly. At the end of the eighteenth century, influenced by English architects Sir Christopher Wren and James Gibbs, American Congregationalists added high towers surmounted by spires to the front façades of their church buildings, resulting in that most iconic of American structures, the New England Congregationalist meetinghouse.⁹⁹

Since the 1850's, however, in response to competition from more liturgically-oriented Episcopalians and a backlash from the anti-formalist practices of revivalists, national Congregational denominational leadership had been moving away both from its traditional anti-liturgical biases and from the spare pragmatism that characterized traditional meetinghouses.¹⁰⁰ As early as 1869, the year of Ravenswood's founding, arbiters of taste minimized the plainness of the traditional meetinghouse: "Bareness and meagerness are not necessary." Instead, they advocated "[c]omfort, convenience, durability, taste, proportion, beauty, the education of a community by chaste artistic designs, the best materials, a careful construction, [and] an elaborate finish."¹⁰¹ By the early 1880's, Congregationalist theorists even expressed confident support for less

⁹⁹ Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 10-11.

¹⁰⁰ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166; William H. Pierson, Jr., "Richardson's Trinity Church and the New England Meetinghouse," in Craig Robert Zabel, Susan Scott Munshower, Susan C. Scott, *American Public Architecture: European Roots and Native Expressions* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1989).

¹⁰¹ Joseph Sylvester Clark, et al., *The Congregational Quarterly* (American Congregational Association, 1869), 512.

austere houses of worship. In a series of lectures delivered at Andover Theological Seminary, the American philosopher George Trumbull Ladd propounded on the tenets of modern Congregationalism, which—he argued—left room for the consideration of aesthetics in architecture and worship without sacrificing original Congregationalist principles. To this end, he envisioned that “[t]he ideal meeting-house will be the most beautiful structure possible for the amount of money which it is right to expend on it: it will also most perfectly serve the ends of effective preaching, devout and tasteful worship, free and warm social intercourse.”¹⁰² Cost, preaching, and the encouragement of sociability among members became the main concerns of church-building congregations.

To these ends, the *Congregational Year Books* of the late 1870’s and early 1880’s presented sample designs, all in the Gothic style, with “simple, inexpensive details, without elaborate carving or useless architectural forms or ornaments.” All of the designs feature the extremely popular bowled floor plan with a circular seating arrangement, to which any style of architecture could be adapted and which facilitated preaching by allowing every person in the auditorium to see the preacher. Noted the architect who authored the plans, “nothing exceeds this arrangement of the circular seats, radiating aisles, and bowled floor for comfort and producing sociality among the members.” The prescriptions offered in the *Year Books* made much of recognizing the necessary balance

¹⁰² George Trumbull Ladd, *The Principles of Church Polity Illustrated by an Analysis of Modern Congregationalism and Applied to Certain Important Practical Questions in the Government of Christian Churches*, Southworth Lectures Delivered at Andover Theological Seminary in the Years 1879-1881 (New York: Scribner, 1882), 60.

between the “most churchly character...[and] all the comforts desired and required in a modern church building.”¹⁰³ Austerity was out; comfort was in.

In 1884, the Ravenswood Congregational Church began the project of enlarging and remodeling their 1873 church. The reuse of church buildings was not unprecedented in Ravenswood, given the Methodist congregation’s hand-me-down frame church a few blocks away.¹⁰⁴ No record of an architect for the project exists, so it was probably conducted under the supervision and guidance of the builder. Construction began in June, when the old church was raised and a brick basement constructed under it. The brick basement made space for two large Sunday School rooms, two large parlors, and a study. Two ten by forty foot additions, made on either side of the church, expanded the first floor space and widened the sanctuary. A square attached tower surmounted by a tapered, shingled spire was added at the southwest corner of the building’s front facade, the base of which contained a porch and entrance approached by a flight of stairs.

Like the old church, the new church faced west onto Commercial. The exterior of the new two story brick and frame building was finished in the Stick Style, with horizontal clapboard siding, stickwork, and fish-scale shingles in the gables. The hipped gables at the west and east ends were supported by four wood brackets at the top eaves, while the side additions created a gable transepts with decorative trusses. The first story, containing the Sunday School rooms and parlors, had rectangular double-

¹⁰³ *The Year Book of the Congregational Christian Churches of the United States of America*. General Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches of the United States, Executive Committee, 1879, 21; National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States, *The Congregational Year-book*. (Boston: Congregational Pub. Society, 1881).

¹⁰⁴ The rear part of the 1873 Ravenswood Congregational church, a lecture room used by the Sunday School, was moved later to a lot east of the church and made into a one-story parsonage in 1888.



Figure 7. The 1884 Ravenswood Congregational church structure, looking northeast. RCC records.

hung, sixteen pane windows with shutters. The second story kept the old church windows, tall, Gothic-inspired lancet windows with diamond paned colored glass, set off by vertical stickwork.

The interior of the church came under renovation as well. According to the fashion of the time, the walls and ceilings were frescoed in neutral colors and an organic stencil ran around the audience room just above the mid-point of the wall. Per the instructions of the *Congregational Year Books*, new rounded wood pews were placed in concentric arcs in the sanctuary, with two aisles radiating out toward the back. A proscenium arch framed an extravagant new organ placed at the front of the auditorium. The organ was hand-pumped; as one congregation member recalled, a “sturdy young lad, working the handle vigorously to fill the air bellows, was hidden from the congregation by a green baize screen, and earned his quarter of a dollar at hard labor.”¹⁰⁵ A relatively

¹⁰⁵ “The Old Church,” *The Lighted Cross*, Aug. 1929, 18.

simple wood pulpit stood at the center of a raised platform at the front of the church, with rows of seating for the choir on either side. Two Gothic wooden doors flanked the organ at the front of the auditorium, leading to support space behind the stage.

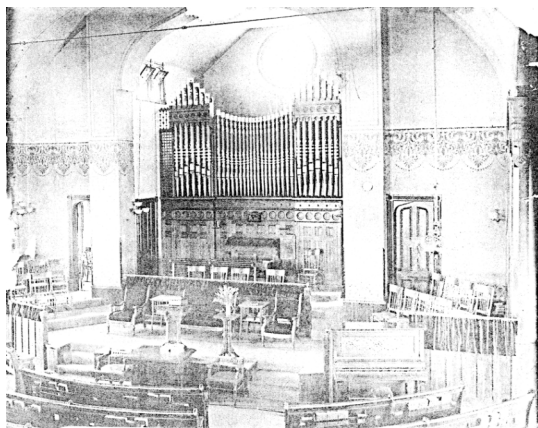


Figure 8. The stage of the 1884 Ravenswood Congregational church. Note the curved pews and stenciling on the walls. RCC records.

When the remodeling was complete, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* pronounced it a success, “the whole making a place of worship which, for beauty and convenience, is equaled by very few in the suburbs of Chicago.”¹⁰⁶ After nearly two years of planning and construction, the congregation finally dedicated the new building on January 11, 1886. On this auspicious day, Lloyd based his dedicatory sermon on the biblical text “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy House, and the place where Thine honor dwelleth.” At the dedication, the Chairman of the Building Committee, R.J. Bennett, announced to the congregation that of the total expense of the improvement—\$9,174—all but \$2,408 had already been paid for.¹⁰⁷ The mood of the congregation was one of excitement for the future: “The Old Church had vanished. No one seemed to regret it. Everyone was filled with a jubilant feeling of better and more prosperous days to

¹⁰⁶ “Suburban (Ravenswood—Church Dedication),” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 12, 1885, 2

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

come.¹⁰⁸ For the congregation, the new church spoke of growth and progress, both in the church and in Ravenswood as a whole.

Built in the self-consciously suburban Stick Style, the church attested to the clear suburban identity of Ravenswood during the mid-1880's. Originally championed by Andrew Jackson Downing in *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), the Stick Style spread quickly on the East Coast, reaching Chicago only after the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition gave it broader exposure. Primarily a residential style, the Stick Style was an effort, through its irregular shapes and lack of symmetry, to imitate the natural landscape. The Stick Style's close relationship to Downing's favored Gothic Revival would have made it an attractive style for suburban churches.

By building in an architectural style more usually employed in residences, the church articulated a domestic identification. Of the thirty-nine churches built in Chicago proper between 1877 and 1885, contemporary historian Alfred Andreas observed that the Norman-Gothic and pure Gothic styles predominated: "no marked deviation from the generally received principles of ecclesiastical architecture is noticeable."¹⁰⁹ But in Ravenswood, both All Saints and the new Congregational church expressed more homely values. This tendency is reinforced by other studies of late nineteenth-century suburban churches, where "church designers and congregations turned to the sacralized home for inspiration."¹¹⁰ These designers operated under an assumption that, like Ravenswood

¹⁰⁸ "The Old Church," *The Lighted Cross*, August 1929, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Alfred Theodore Andreas, *History of Chicago* (New York: Arno Press, 1975 [1884-86]), 66.

¹¹⁰ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 148.

Congregational and All Saints, the church should resemble a middle class home, in its size, design, and setting, a standard corner lot.



Figures 9 and 10. Representative examples of residences constructed in Ravenswood in the 1870's and 1880's. Note the similarities to the Congregational church: raised porch, stick work, and situation on a single lot. Chicago Public Library.

The trend toward homely church architecture in the late nineteenth century derived from the increasing power of family piety ideology among the American middle classes, a vision of Christianity centered around and grounded upon the nuclear family and the home.¹¹¹ The use of domestic styles in church exteriors reflected the growing identification of Protestant Christianity with domesticity and the family.¹¹² An 1853 manual on Congregational church architecture had recommended that the church resemble the finest homes in a community and, twenty years later, “[c]hurch designers so closely followed these domestic strategies that were it not for a steeple attached at some

¹¹¹ “The domestic ideal of the single family home, having achieved the position of the predominant symbol of Christian piety and social stability, had become the standard against which all churchly sacredness was measured. No longer did the church control what was sacred and what was appropriate in the church. That which was churchly was domestic.” Kilde, *Theatre*, 164

¹¹² The translation of family piety ideology into architecture drew upon the aesthetic theory of “associationalism”—“so popularized by the 1870’s that it seemed self-evident”—which held that architectural elements signified social and moral laws, and that exposure to these elements could positively influence the individual. Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 55.

point on the roof, many smaller churches of the period would hardly be distinguished from private homes.”¹¹³ Most of the private homes in Ravenswood were relatively modest two story frame structures with brick or stone basements and the 1885 church, though larger than these homes, was distinguished in essentials only by its Gothic windows and spire.



Figure 11. Aerial view of Ravenswood, c. 1889, looking southeast from the corner of Wilson and Ravenswood Avenues. The spire of Ravenswood Congregational is visible on the horizon, to the left of center. Chicago Public Library.

Changing ideals also affected the interior of the church. The incorporation of domestic ideals into Protestantism and Protestant church architecture meant that rooms previously identified with homes, such as parlors, studies, kitchens, and dining rooms, increasingly entered into the design program of religious structures.¹¹⁴ The greater emphasis on comfort played a role as well. In 1881, the *Congregational Year Book* posed the hypothetical question: “Why are not the prayer meetings better attended? Pray, what is there to attract? When evening comes round for our religious duty, in what does the

¹¹³ *A Book of Plans for Churches and Parsonages*, 1853, quoted in Pierson, 17; Kilde, *Theatre*, 156.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148-153.

attraction consist from your own warm parlors and firesides?”¹¹⁵ A cheerful audience room, open fireplaces, and comfortable seats, the author argued, would attract people from their homes. As the church became more home-like, family events that once would have been held from the home, like weddings and funerals, came more and more to be held within the confines of the church. A beautiful, comfortable church building was also seen as a way to keep members from absconding to other churches: “For congregations intent upon attracting respectable and even wealthy members, conversance with the latest trends in interior fashion was a must.”¹¹⁶

Criticisms of these home-like, or family churches, came from orthodox evangelicals, who felt that the family church concentrated too much on social interaction among the already-saved members, robbing energy and resources from evangelization efforts. This prioritization, critics felt, was indicative of a liberal stance on the saving of souls.¹¹⁷ Ravenswood Congregational did indeed tread delicately in these matters. An invitation to new members shortly after the dedication of the new church emphasizes the homeliness and comfort of the new building: “To those who have no church home: ... We ask you to come and enjoy with us our comfortable and pleasant sanctuary... We do not desire to persuade you to prefer our church to other churches. We do urge you to make some church yours, and it is our pleasant duty to proffer you our own hospitality and

¹¹⁵ National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States, *The Congregational year-book*. (Boston: Congregational Pub. Society, 1881), 5.

¹¹⁶ Kilde, *Theatre*, 156.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

extend to you this invitation and welcome.”¹¹⁸ This call to church evokes a social club more than fire and brimstone, and its emphasis on comfort and hospitality speaks to the efforts for Ravenswood citizens to view the church as a second home rather than a base for evangelical fervor.

Moral Geography

The members of Ravenswood’s churches were not wholly deficient in evangelical fervor. Geographers have conceived of the concept of “moral geography,” which describes how people map out their surroundings in to a grid of moral and immoral spaces: “A moral geography, simply put, is the idea that certain people, things and practices belong in certain spaces, places and landscapes and not in others.”¹¹⁹ In the eyes of those perceiving this moral geography, “visions of landscape are connected with ideas of appropriate behaviour that constitute ‘citizenship.’ A moral geography begets moral citizens.”¹²⁰ When the church and the community were indistinguishable from one another, residents displayed little concern for issues of moral geography, but as Ravenswood grew, contrasting zones of respectability and vice emerged. Only by conquering vice within its precincts did Ravenswood churchgoers believe that they could keep the moral geography of the village pure and its citizens truly moral.

¹¹⁸ “Just a Word,” 1886 Announcement, RCC collection, Sulzer Regional Library, Box 1, folder 20.

¹¹⁹ Cresswell continues: “the role of power [is central] in constituting the relationship between geography on the ground and the practices of social groups and individuals....Moral geographies, as conventionally defined, are ideological geographies.” Tim Cresswell, “Moral Geographies,” in David Atkinson, et. al., *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2005), 128.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 129. Cresswell draws this formulation from the work of David Matless, *Landscapes and Englishness* (London: Reaktion, 1998.)

Throughout the existence of the Ravenswood Congregational Church, we see clear efforts to create a moral geography by carrying the values of the church into public space. Even as Reverend Lloyd was supervising the erection and completion of the Congregational church's first structure in 1870, he began establishing mission Sunday schools in the surrounding villages of Bowmanville, Rose Hill, Summerdale, and on both Evanston (now Broadway) and Waveland Avenues. He conducted these Sunday Schools until they developed into independent churches, establishing a web of evangelical churches that crisscrossed the territory around Ravenswood, reinforcing a strong moral presence in the area.¹²¹

By the mid-1880's, when the Congregationalists erected their new church, the community that had nurtured the values it symbolized was already changing. A colony of working-class Swedes relocated near Ravenswood, pushed out of the old Swede Town on Chicago's near north side by the incursion of Italians.¹²² The Ravenswood School was filled to capacity, with one hundred children in the vicinity who could not be accommodated in the current facilities.¹²³ As more and more "strangers" moved to Ravenswood, efforts to regulate public morality became more pronounced. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported in 1885 that "[b]ase-ball playing Sunday is interfering with the attendance at Sunday-school, and it is said that legal steps will be taken to stop the

¹²¹ Currey, 725.

¹²² Anita R. Olson, "A Community Created: Chicago Swedes, 1880-1950," in Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'Alroy Jones, *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 117-118.

¹²³ "Suburban," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 30, 1885, 8.

nuisance if milder measures prove ineffectual.”¹²⁴ A month and a half later, the concerns went beyond Sunday School lessons: “Steps are being taken to form a law and order league for the enforcement of the Sunday laws.”¹²⁵

The real root of the unrest seems to be the issue of saloons and their influence on the character of the youth of the community. Temperance had always been a hot button issue in Ravenswood, and in the 1870’s the local branch of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union was popular among the most respected women in the community. By 1884, both a young women’s and a children’s branch of the WCTU had been formed, and both were well attended. The children’s society was conducted in the matter of Sunday School, with regular temperance lessons substituted for religious instruction. At one meeting in 1884, the children’s branch was lectured on “the injurious effect of excess in any direction.” The boys and girls were “required to make a promise that they will not use any liquor or tobacco and will refrain from profane and improper language.”¹²⁶ Given these educational initiatives, temperance activists were confident that their efforts would prevent the success of saloons in the village. So in 1885, when it was reported that boys from Ravenswood were “frequenting a saloon in the vicinity of Bowmanville,” the community to the west of Ravenswood, residents were outraged. A newly formed Citizens Law and Order League threatened to bring legal proceedings if the practice was

¹²⁴ Ibid., May 10, 1885, 16.

¹²⁵ Ibid., June 27, 1885, 8.

¹²⁶ Ibid., April 24, 1884, 8.

not curtailed. Within months, membership in the Citizens League had increased rapidly, and the League threatened suits against six saloonkeepers.¹²⁷

By 1886, the problem had increased to the point that the trustees of the Ravenswood Congregational Church published a resolution condemning liquor traffic. This resolution enumerated the many deleterious effects of drinking, calling dramshops “corrupters of youth” that “tempt men...debase character, blunt moral sensibilities... bring desolation, shame, and anguish to countless homes.” The resolution argued that saloons have a negative effect on community life and played upon residents’ concerns about property values:

These drinking places depreciate property, turn away desirable residents, are a dangerous temptation to many, particularly to the young, and a constant menace to order and decency. They corrupt township elections, and public affairs are made subordinate to the saloon interests. Their habitual violations of the Sunday laws and ordinances and desecrations of the Sabbath are a pernicious and degrading example of lawlessness and irreligion.¹²⁸

By framing drink as a sin and as a danger to property values, the resolution appealed to both the moral and the pragmatic natures of Ravenswood homeowners.

From this resolution proceeded the most successful effort of the Ravenswood churches to regulate the use of public space. Through the Ravenswood Prohibition Society, which included members from all three Ravenswood churches, Reverend Lloyd led a three-year fight to secure a prohibition district in the community. An ally recalled: “From the first he stood firm and personally led the fight against the invasion of Ravenswood by saloons. They resorted to desperate and despicable measures to unhorse

¹²⁷ “Chicago’s Suburbs,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 6, 1885, 10; “Suburban,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 12, 1885, 8.

¹²⁸ Newsclipping, RCC collection, Sulzer Regional Library, Box 1, file 1.

him.”¹²⁹ The struggle for the prohibition district took a visible toll on Lloyd’s health, but in the end the prohibition advocates succeeded. The last act of Ravenswood village council before the annexation of Lake View to Chicago was the creation of a prohibition district 150 feet east or west of Clark Street and 150 feet east or west of Lincoln Avenue, making prohibition a permanent part of the community even as it came under the jurisdiction of Chicago.

The prohibition district was popular in Ravenswood, so much so that when, later, the town council twice attempted to disestablish it, each time public outcry forced them to include a larger territory. Residents felt that the prohibition district enhanced the value of the community, both in quality of residents and in property values; it “drew a more desirable class of people here and made land here two or three times the value of lots much nearer the city.”¹³⁰ The congruence of the prohibition district with the borders of the Ravenswood community was clearly implanted in the minds of its residents: “The old Ravenswood limits were thought of as the prohibition limits laid down by the people of Ravenswood.”¹³¹ In this way, the members of Ravenswood’s churches extended the moral geography of their suburb to the edge of its geographical limits.

Changing Ravenswood

By the end of the 1880’s, the home-like village where everyone knew everyone else, so beloved by Ravenswood’s early citizens, was on the wane. The deep mud sloughs

¹²⁹ Currey, 726.

¹³⁰ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 19, 24.

¹³¹ Ibid., doc. 16, 1.

had disappeared in place of paved streets and cement walks. Manufacturing plants had sprung up along Ravenswood Park, the street abutting the Chicago and North Western railroad. The population had grown to 3,500 people. On top of all of this, at this time the annexation of all of Lake View to the city of Chicago appeared on the horizon.

Annexation proved to be a major turning point in the place identity of Ravenswood. In Chicago and its outlying townships, proponents for annexation argued that the measure promised better, less expensive city services like running water, a sewer system, and electricity, as well as better police and fire protection. Opponents feared the loss of local prerogative, particularly as regarded the fate of temperance zones. The citizens of Ravenswood seem to have generally opposed annexation. At an 1887 meeting at Library Hall to talk over the subject, “[n]early every one present put himself on record as against annexation” and an anti-annexation club was formed, with R.J. Bennett as President.¹³² Two months later, Ravenswood—along with the rest of Lake View Township—rejected annexation in order to give the new Lake View Township government “a more extended trial.”¹³³

In 1889, another annexation measure came before suburban voters, but this time the tide of public opinion had shifted. Frustrated with high local taxes and the perception of corrupt local governments, many suburbanites favored union with Chicago. That year, the Chicago City Council also passed a measure allowing localities to retain prohibition districts after annexation, which abated some of the most trenchant criticisms of annexation. In Ravenswood, however, local opposition to annexation persisted. The

¹³² “The City,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1887, 14.

¹³³ “The Triumph of Annexation,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 9, 1887.

annexation measure passed in Lake View as a whole, but each of the three precincts of Ravenswood's 7th Ward voted against annexation, with 7th Ward voters registering 177 votes for annexation to 471 votes against.¹³⁴

Chicago annexed Ravenswood along with the rest of Lake View, but the lopsided tally indicates a desire on the part of Ravenswood voters to maintain an identity distinct from the larger city. The annexation measure confronted Ravenswood's citizens with a fundamental choice about the community's identity and future, and the majority of them rejected the possible effects that urban life would have on their home-like community. Though in practice annexation represented more of a symbolic change for Ravenswood than one with immediate repercussions, it resonated nonetheless. In the memory of one resident, annexation marked the moment that "[t]he smoking, clattering, hungry city of Chicago...swallowed another demure village, whose first and only claim to distinction was its remoteness from bustle."¹³⁵

The years following annexation brought more concrete changes to the religious landscape of Ravenswood. In 1889, Reverend Lloyd stepped down from the post that he had held for nearly twenty years because of ill health. His friends agreed that his illness stemmed from the stress of inoculating Ravenswood from the negative influences of Chicago through the permanent establishment of the prohibition district. The next year, Ravenswood Methodist Episcopal Church abandoned their hand-me-down frame church and built a substantial limestone structure a block north of the Congregational church.

¹³⁴ In Lakeview as a whole, 2,508 voted for annexation, with 1,999 against. Karen Donnelly and LeRoy Blommaert, "!!EXTRA!! EXTRA!! Annexation Approved Chicago #2 in Nation," *The Edgewater Historical Society Newsletter* I, no. 4 (1989), <http://www.edgewaterhistory.org>, accessed August 30, 2010.

¹³⁵ John B. Stone, "Ravenswood Now Only a Memory," typescript, around 1930, Local History Collection, Sulzer Regional Library, Chicago.

Built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, it boasted heavy rounded arches over doors and windows, with a looming square tower on the corner. This fortress-like church veered away from the home-like community standard set by Ravenswood Congregational and All Saints' simple suburban structures. Ravenswood's changing sense of self as a part of Chicago, subject to new stresses and conflicts, was expressed in the construction of a church that resembled an armory.¹³⁶

At the same time, new members of the community established churches that diverged from the straight and narrow path of mainline Protestantism. The first mass of Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic church was held in a newly constructed public hall on March 29, 1891, although the Catholics did not construct their own building until 1896. Then, in October of 1891, after months of open air services in the "Ball Park" located on Sunnyside and Lyman (now Seeley), the Ravenswood Baptist Church was formally established. Ravenswood still looked like a village, but its institutional bases had expanded far beyond the confines of the Ravenswood Congregational Church.

Conclusion: Shaping a Sense of Place Over Time

The early settlers of Ravenswood founded Ravenswood Congregational Church as a strictly spiritual enterprise. Yet the church performed other functions from its very establishment; it was seen as a necessity by both the commercial entrepreneurs whose investments relied on the community's success, and by residents, who aimed to mold Ravenswood into a model, moral community with respectable, Christian, middle-class values. The church played a central role in the lives of many of its active members and, in

¹³⁶ See Kilde, *Theatre*, Chapter 4: "Spiritual Armories on the New Suburban Landscape," 84-111.

the first years of Ravenswood's existence, the lack of other community institutions dictated that the church take on a social role in the broader community. In the minds of Ravenswood's early citizens, the village and the church became identified with one another. In reminiscences, little distinction, if any, is made between the church and the community. Hagiographic memories recall an idyll of good feeling: "Happy, happy days when the interests of the church, the school and the whole community were so closely linked together."¹³⁷

For fifteen years, Ravenswood was essentially a non-pluralistic community. The establishment of the Methodist and Episcopal churches provided some element of religious choice, but within a largely circumscribed set of traditional Protestant Christian beliefs. Only in a relatively encapsulated world, where everyone came from similar backgrounds and held similar values, could the church be wholly identified with the place. As Ravenswood became larger and more incrementally more diverse, the Ravenswood Congregational Church became less and less central to Ravenswood. The initial impulses that made the Ravenswood church so central to the creation of social networks disappeared when a greater number of religious and secular institutions provided competition for the time and energies of residents.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ "The Old Church," *The Lighted Cross*, May 1931, 24-5.

¹³⁸ The sociologist Daniel Olson has observed that "new churches are likely to have many members whose demand for church-based friendships are not yet satiated." The members of these churches therefore make room in their lives for the formation of new social contacts and new friendships that reinforce community bonds. In contrast, "members of old and stable churches tend to have all the friends they want," and therefore remain in a state of social stasis. Warner, "New Paradigm," 1064. See Daniel V. A. Olson, "Church Friendships: Boon or Barrier to Church Growth?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28, no. 4 (1989): 432-447.

As Ravenswood's population grew, the network of overlapping memberships that created a coherent, popularly understood place identity no longer encompassed all areas of the community's life. Community behaviors became diversified under the expansion of choices available to residents and the network converged at fewer common nodes. Similarly, as the landscape filled with competing commercial and leisure interests, it was no longer feasible for the church to look exactly like the homes in the community. In the increasingly competitive marketplace of the landscape, the church needed to mark its peculiarity rather than its representativeness. Still, as Ravenswood changed around them, the suburban Stick-Style churches of All Saints and Ravenswood Congregational stood as a testament on the landscape to the close-knit, homely community that Ravenswood had been. Decades later in the life of the Ravenswood Congregational Church, "The Old Church" became personified in recurring columns in the church bulletin, where its existence symbolized the simpler times of a bygone era: "I'm the Old Church which holds Ravenswood in the evergreen memory of Time which is always young."¹³⁹

¹³⁹ "The Old Church," RCC collection, Sulzer Library, Box 2, folder 27.

**CHAPTER TWO:
“THE MODEL SUBURB OF THE WEST” –
THE CHURCH’S ROLE IN THE CREATION OF SUBURBAN IDENTITY**

Many years later, after he had ascended to the rank of Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia, Washington, Frederic W. Keator would often have occasion to recall the last day of May, 1891, when, after several years practicing law, he was ordained a deacon and embarked on his pastoral vocation. The investiture took place in Edgewater, a new lakeside suburb north of Chicago, in a lovely English Gothic church constructed only a year before by the fledgling congregation of the Church of the Atonement. That morning, the Bishop of Chicago and other esteemed guests traveled the seven miles up to Edgewater by train for the service. Three hundred well-dressed spectators packed the stone church to witness a ceremony filled with pomp and ritual, performed beneath a soaring ceiling braced by wood trusses, against a backdrop of murals executed in rich colors. Soft light filtered through the diamond-paned windows onto the assembled congregation.

During his sermon, the bishop congratulated Keator’s congregation on the success of its new building, thanking “my friends who have made it outwardly beautiful to symbolize the beauty of the inward religion.”¹ The congregation had much of which to be proud, for the outward beauty of the church did more than symbolize the beauty of

¹ “Invested with Deacon’s Orders,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 1, 1891, 4.

inward religion; it also expressed the affluence and refinement of this young suburb where Keator would spend the first years of his long career.

Two days later, on a pleasantly warm early summer evening, hundreds of guests filed into the elegant new home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Balmer, a block away from the church, for a reception to honor the newly ordained deacon. Mrs. Balmer had prepared the house carefully for such an important occasion. A mandolin orchestra played under the staircase in the wide reception hall and the ethereal sound echoed through the hall from behind a screen of ferns and palms. Multi-colored glass globes diffused the electric light and cast rainbows of color over elaborate arrangements of roses, japonicas, jonquils, and pansies. Against this backdrop, a parade of Edgewater's most eligible residents and their guests from Chicago glided through the spacious drawing room of the Balmers' home, where Mr. Keator and his hosts greeted each one of them.² This splendid social occasion was emblematic of all that Edgewater had to offer to its residents: taste, culture, and exclusive society, all in the most stylish and graceful of physical settings.

In contrast to the unimproved lots of early Ravenswood, the developer of Edgewater, John L. Cochran, sought to sculpt and shape every detail of the nascent suburb. He commissioned a single architect to design Edgewater's first houses in a coherent fashion, hired landscapers to beautify the lots and streets, and created electric plants and commuter trains specifically to serve Edgewater. The building erected by the Church of the Atonement fit seamlessly into Cochran's comprehensive vision of prosperous suburban living, providing the open landscape with a potent symbol of Protestant morality and genteel stability.

² "Reception to the Rev. F.W. Keator," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 3, 1891, 5.

Yet the Church of the Atonement never enjoyed the same monopoly on religious and social life in Edgewater that Ravenswood Congregational had achieved in Ravenswood. Within a decade of its establishment the Church of the Atonement shared the landscape with churches of every mainline Protestant stripe and a bevy of private clubs, both in Edgewater and in the nearby residential developments of Buena Park and Sheridan Park. Church was just one of many communities of interaction that residents used to define personal identity. As a result, membership in the Church of the Atonement served mainly as a desirable accessory to a broader social identity defined by membership in a wide array of institutions, all of which mapped out the values of a class-conscious and status-driven suburban development. Rather than actively shaping the place identity of Edgewater, the Church of the Atonement reinforced both the Edgewater brand of suburban prosperity and the values increasingly shared by the growing suburban population across the United States, values which included but were not wholly defined by traditional Protestant morality.

The partial nature of residents' commitment to any single institution in Edgewater was reinforced by the fact that the Church of the Atonement served a population for whom upward social mobility meant residential mobility as well. In contrast to Ravenswood, which remained home to successive generations of the same families, many residents of Edgewater, Buena Park, and Sheridan Park stayed only a few years before moving on to newer or more prestigious suburban developments farther away from the city. In the short term, such residential mobility weakened the ability of churches in these suburbs to influence their communities in any fundamental way. In the long term, this history of limited commitment to place would undermine efforts by churches in the

lakeshore suburbs to contest the commercial development that arrived with the extension of elevated trains and streetcars after the turn of the twentieth century.³

The Suburban Impulse

After the Great Fire of 1871, Chicago experienced a period of explosive economic and demographic growth, which directly contributed to the expansion of commuter villages like Ravenswood. When railroads opened up the wide expanses and rich natural resources of the Great West for trade, Chicago became the primary gateway of commerce between the East Coast and the western states. This serendipitous position made the city home to a wide variety of booming industries, including grain, lumber, meat-packing, and farm machinery.⁴ By 1890, Chicago was the second largest city in the country, and the largest west of the Alleghenies. The Fire of 1871 had performed the added service of clearing the built environment of the old pedestrian city away in much of the city core, creating a tabula rosa on which to shape the dimensions of the diffuse streetcar city with

³ The sociologist Morris Janowitz observed similar issues of residential mobility and limited commitment to place in many twentieth century communities. Janowitz called such places “communities of limited liability.” See Morris Janowitz, *The Community Press in an Urban Setting* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952), 207-225. Following Janowitz, Nicole Marwell has defined a community of limited liability as “a place to which individuals and families owed only marginal allegiance, and thus wherein only certain kinds of social integration could take place.” Nicole P. Marwell, *Bargaining for Brooklyn: Community Organizations in the Entrepreneurial City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 20. The community of limited liability model allows for the importance of geographic allegiance but also acknowledges that residents’ involvement in the local community is voluntary and limited by how much the community meets their needs. In such a place, local community is just one component of identity, along with other, less geographically-linked associations. The mobility—or potential mobility—of residents is key; community involvement can always be cut short by departure: “A resident may view the neighborhood as a status symbol or asset to be used as needed and traded in as new opportunities and needs arise.” D. Mark Austin and Patricia Gagne, “Community in a Mobile Subculture: The World of the Touring Motorcyclist,” in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* 30 (2008): 414. Such conditional investment in place limits the capacity of a community to withstand negative change, as many residents would rather move out of the community than fight to maintain it.

⁴ See William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 36-46.

its center anchored in the Loop.⁵ Within two decades, Chicago boasted a modern downtown with skyscrapers that rose toward the clouds and a network of transportation that stretched out across the prairie, allowing for the dispersion of population in larger and larger rings of settlement.

Sam Bass Warner identifies a partnership between large corporate institutions and individual homeowners that worked toward the construction of this new suburban metropolis.⁶ Paralleling and making possible the vertical expansion of the center city and its physical expansion toward the periphery were the rising power and numbers of Chicago's middle class. The expansion of the middle class was effected in part by a transformation in American business culture, which increasingly came to be defined by the modern corporation. The corporatization of American business nourished a rising class of white-collar managers, clerks, and bookkeepers and prosperous small businessmen.⁷ These upwardly mobile white-collar workers shared "a strong middle-class identity that focused...principally [on] order and respectability."⁸ They also shared an

⁵ For a larger discussion of the creation of the streetcar city in Boston, see Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

⁶ Warner, 4.

⁷ See Oliver Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 4-5, 127; John R. Stilgoe, *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁸ Thekla Ellen Joiner, *Sin in the City: Chicago and Revivalism, 1880-1920* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 26. William I. Barney gives a more detailed description of characteristics of the post-bellum American middle class in his *Companion to Nineteenth Century America* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2001): "Middle class people continued to limit the number of children they had, to guard and privilege the privacy of their families, to live in increasingly class-segregated parts of the city, and to enjoy the benefits of a fairly comfortable standard of living. Being middle class also meant ascribing to certain values, many of which were inherited from eighteenth-century republican thought and reinforced in the evangelical Protestant revivals of the Second Great Awakening." (184) See also Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1769-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

enthusiasm for a “two-part city—a city of work separated from homes,” an enthusiasm encouraged and financed by corporations and investors. Through the last three decades of the nineteenth century, this group of white-collar workers and small businessmen migrated steadily to the suburbs on the fringes of the city in what Warner calls “a popular movement...executed by hundreds of thousands of middle class citizens.”⁹

The middle-class migration to the early suburbs was in part a flight away from the menace and dangers of the industrialized city. For many middle class Protestants, the dangers of the industrialized city took on a moral edge. According to Robert Orsi, “the city was cast as the necessary mirror of American civilization, and fundamental categories of American reality—whiteness, heterosexuality, domestic virtue, feminine purity, middle-class respectability—were constituted in opposition to what was said to exist in cities.”¹⁰ Reformers’ evaluations of the conditions in cities portrayed a place not suitable for respectable inhabitation; the slums of the city were a “cesspool” filled with “vile, debauched..., impure, [and] besotted mass of humanity.”¹¹ In the popular work *Our Country*, published in 1885, Protestant clergyman Josiah Strong singled out the threat posed by foreigners: their authoritarian Roman Catholicism and their dissolute saloons bred and nurtured evil impulses. Furthermore, he warned, poverty encouraged them to turn to Socialism, anarchism, and other revolutionary ideologies that threatened the

⁹ Warner, 4.

¹⁰ Robert Orsi, *Gods of the City* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 5.

¹¹ Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* (Chicago: Advance Publishing Co., 1898), 73, 93.

property holdings of more successful men: “Socialism centers in the city, and the materials of its growth are multiplied with the growth of the city.”¹²

These threats were not merely conjectural. In 1886, Chicago had been gripped by the trial of the Haymarket conspirators—many of them foreign-born, all of them unapologetic radicals and anarchists—who trumpeted the use of violence as the only tool left to the workers in their ongoing struggle against the forces of capital. Carl Smith writes of a middle-class popular imagination at this time “which had come to see social and political protest, class warfare, and cataclysmic violence, all set against the industrial neighborhoods of American cities, as a single phenomenon.”¹³ For middle-class Chicagoans who placed a high premium on order, “[t]he city was a degraded and degrading environment where beauty and utility, good works and profit, capital and labor could never be reconciled, and where fire, filth, and ferment perhaps could never be avoided.”¹⁴ Reverend Strong spoke for many in the middle and upper classes when he wrote, “The city has become a serious menace to our civilization.”¹⁵

About this time a consensus began to emerge, concurrent with the rise of the new professional and managerial class, that suburban communities provided the solution to urban problems. According to Mary Corbin Sies, the suburbs “embodied two powerful social goals: the new suburbanites’ determination to formalize their own life-style and position in society in a suitable residential setting, and their desire to devise a model

¹² Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: The Baker and Taylor Co. for the American Home Missionary Society, 1891), 183.

¹³ Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 125.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 197-98.

¹⁵ Strong, 180.

environment that might remedy the worst housing conditions and social problems of the city.”¹⁶ The belief that suburbs could achieve these goals was premised on key shared national ideals: personal independence, freedom of choice, family pride, self-sufficiency, and private enterprise. Such like-mindedness among the adherents of the suburban ideal resulted in a drive toward homogeneity, “a backlash against the perceived cacophony of urban life and the deep, abiding wish to live with like-minded people.” Instead, “[a]ttracting families of similar class, religion, ethnicity, and race promised social cohesion and the kind of consensus needed to build sustainable suburban communities.”¹⁷ A crucial element of the suburban ideal lay in the moral overtones of this spatial movement. “Fundamental to the emerging consensus about the reform capabilities of suburban life was an abiding faith in environmentalism. The physical environment of the suburbs would sustain moral renewal.”¹⁸

Thus, for the rising middle and upper classes, the suburbs constituted not just a physical solution to the problems of the city, but a moral solution.¹⁹ Early suburbs were

¹⁶ Mary Corbin Sies, “Toward a Performance Theory of the Suburban Ideal, 1877-1917,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 4 (1991): 201-202.

¹⁷ Roger Panetta, Westchester: *The American Suburb* (USA: The Hudson River Museum, 2006), 32.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁹ By 1889, many of Chicago’s earliest suburbs, like Ravenswood, ceased technically to be suburbs due to a widespread move toward annexation of peripheral townships to the city of Chicago—paradoxically, at a time when many Chicagoans of more than modest means sought to escape the ferment of the city, the city looked to regain lost population by annexing the periphery to itself. In suburbs, the push for annexation came out of a desire for better government services and other resources available to modern urban centers. See Ann Durkin Keating, *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988). This chapter will treat places of a suburban character as suburbs, for it is less concerned with the legal and governmental status than with the style of living and public image of such developments. Contemporaries made no such distinction in their descriptions of Edgewater in the 1890’s; in an 1894 article on commuter trains, the reporter noted, “the limits of suburban traffic do not greatly exceed the actual limits of the city, so that the so-called suburban life is largely intraurban.” “Like a Tidal Wave,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 5, 1894, 25. In *Crabgrass*

to be the embodiment of the middle-class ethic: single-family homes and a well-ordered community life, separated from the ills of the contemporary city and centered around ordered, respectable—and exclusive—institutions.²⁰ Original stock Protestant Americans would predominate. The pernicious influence of the saloon would be regulated out of existence. Finally, the prices of suburban living would exclude all those who could not afford a home, so looming threats of urban disorder would be confined to the crowded, roiling masses in the city, far from the expansive lawns and open air of the new suburban communities.

Edgewater

John L. Cochran, the developer of Edgewater, firmly grasped the suburban desires of the upwardly mobile middle class and he endeavored to bring about the complete realization of their dreams in Edgewater. Cochran's development drew together every amenity that prosperous families could hope for: clean air; room to move; accessibility; well-built, attractive homes; a high-status community with residents "of the better class"; and a limited commercial presence. Edgewater was to be the ultimate expression of the good life at the end of the nineteenth century.

Frontier, his seminal work on the American suburbs, Kenneth Jackson defines suburbs as having four clear attributes: "function (non-farm residential), class (middle and upper status), separation (a daily journey-to-work), and density (low relative to older sections)." Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 11. While Jackson concedes that this definition risks over-generalization, it is a good working definition for this study and it provides a clear counter-point to the eminently urbanized neighborhoods that these fringe suburban areas eventually would become, a process set in motion by annexation.

²⁰ Jackson, 45-72; Stilgoe, *Borderland*.

Cochran's life exemplified the sort of entrepreneurial spirit that would mark many of his clients' lives as well. Born in 1857 in Sacramento, California, Cochran grew up and was schooled in Philadelphia, a city whose own suburbs influenced his Edgewater developments deeply. He arrived in Chicago from Philadelphia in 1881 to work as a tobacco salesman and act as the Chicago manager of the M.E. McDowell and Co. tobacco firm, owned by his half-brother Marcellus E. McDowell. Shrewdly surveying the opportunities before him, that same year the twenty-four year old Cochran carried out his first real estate transaction on the near north side. Two years later, he purchased another lot for \$11,700.²¹ In 1883, this property skirted the northern edge of the city; a 1925 Cochran and McClellan Company brochure recalled, "In those days the North side extended little further than Oak and Elm Streets. Fullerton was out in the country."²² But this investment was merely a stepping stone, for Cochran's vision extended much further north.

Cochran's plan, as his son remembered it more than forty years later, was to "stick to the lake shore."²³ In the mid-1880's, this strategy still carried some risk when applied to the north side of the city, since at that time the main force of development thrust south.²⁴ Cochran's enterprise would alter that thinking. With two early partners, his half-brother McDowell and Samuel H. Austin, a distant relative, Cochran intended to build a suburban development that would mimic the towns along the Main Line railroad

²¹ "Sample Sales," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 10, 1883, 10.

²² Vivien Palmer Documents, Uptown I, document 11, 1.

²³ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 15, 1-2.

²⁴ Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago: The Relationship of the Growth of Chicago to the Rise of Its Land Values, 1830-1933* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 137.

running out of Philadelphia.²⁵ In 1885, he bought seventy-six acres in Lake View Township north of 59th Street between Lake Michigan and Evanston Avenue.²⁶ Part of the attraction of this property along the northern lakeshore lay in its proximity to the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, which by 1885 ran four steam trains daily along the lake.

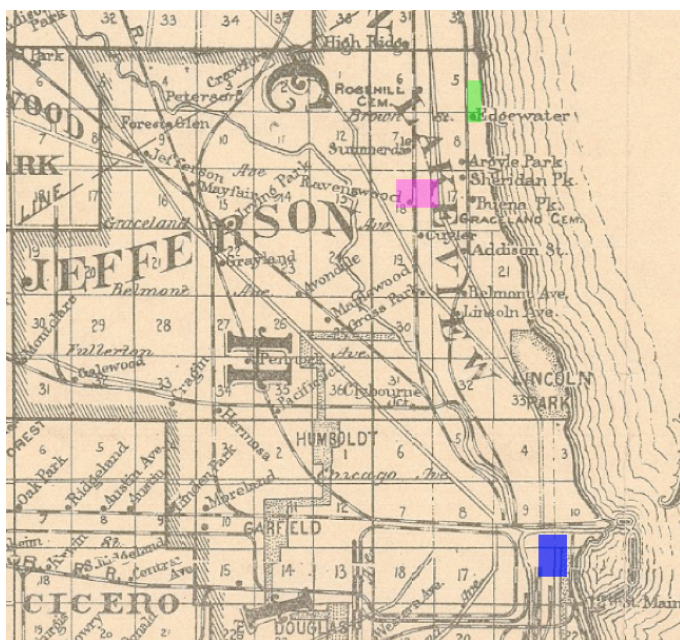


Figure 12. Edgewater's position in relation to the city of Chicago north of the Loop (blue) and to Ravenswood (pink). This detail of an 1893 map of railroad connections also shows stops at suburbs constructed in the years immediately after Cochran broke ground in Edgewater. Chicago: F.C. Rossiter, 1893. University of Chicago Library.

Before Cochran began subdividing and improving the property, “[a]ll the land east of Broadway [at that time, Evanston] was a wilderness” of white birches and scrub oaks.²⁷ Paul Swartzlose, who worked for Cochran from the beginning of his first development, later recalled, “The only person who was living on the land when Cochran bought his first subdivision was a man who had a hut at Granville between Broadway and

²⁵ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 16; Mr. Driever, President of Cochran and McClellan, in 1927, told the interviewer that McDowell was Cochran’s half brother and Austin a distant relative.

²⁶ Today, the boundaries of Cochran’s initial development are Foster Avenue (then 59th Street) and Bryn Mawr, which Cochran named for a stop on the Philadelphia Main Line, and Lake Michigan and Broadway (then Evanston Avenue).

²⁷ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 14, 3.

the lake.”²⁸ Just as in Ravenswood, in the spring rainy periods the area would become an impassable morass. Nevertheless, in 1886 Cochran began improvements, draining the land and laying out streets an orderly grid pattern “on a scale never before attempted in Chicago.”²⁹

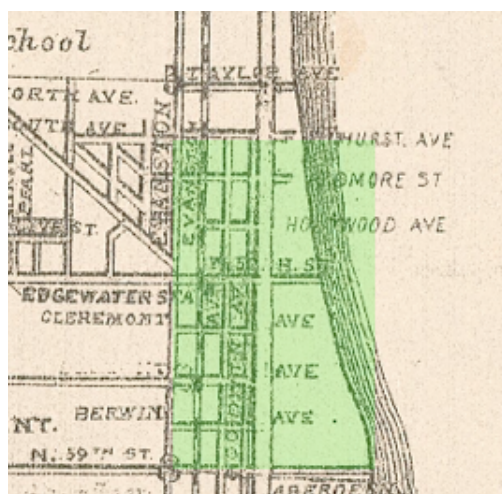


Figure 13. The boundaries of the original Edgewater development and Cochran's First Addition to Edgewater. Detail, map of Chicago and suburbs. Chicago: Charles T. Gilbert Real Estate, 1890. University of Chicago Library.

Among the business and professional classes that comprised the market to which Cochran aspired, comfort and convenience ranked high on the list of desires. As Ann Durkin Keating observes, “Commuters and their families wanted many of the services that they had gotten used to in the city center: running water, indoor plumbing, and gas lighting.”³⁰ In real estate parlance, “city improvements” and “modern conveniences” were code words for these technological advances. According to one of his employees,

²⁸ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 13, 7.

²⁹ John William Leonard, *Who's Who in Finance and Banking, 1920-22* (Brooklyn, NY: Who's Who in Finance, Inc., 1922), 141. The first streets Cochran laid out were quarter mile stretches of the north-south avenues Kenmore and Winthrop, between Bryn Mawr and Balmoral Avenues. After Bryn Mawr, Cochran would draw several more street names from the stops on Philadelphia's Main Line, including Berwyn, Ardmore, Thorndale, and Rosemount.

³⁰ Ann Durkin Keating, *Chicagoland: City and Suburbs in the Railroad Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 108-109. See also Keating, *Building Chicago*, and Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Cochran believed that “the value of land increased greatly with improvements and he followed this out in building wherever he opened up lots.”³¹ Cochran’s innovation was to create these improvements before opening the property up to potential buyers; an 1888 advertisement for Edgewater contrasted “the usual way” of making improvements when the population warranted them with “the Edgewater way...first to make ALL the improvements...and then seek purchasers.”³² Cochran paved the streets with macadam and installed stone curbs, underground sewers, street lights, flagstone sidewalks, and water pipes. After all of the native oaks died when the sewers were installed, he imported and planted elms to beautify the streets. He hired the landscaper at nearby Graceland Cemetery to terrace the sandy soil for better drainage and lighter basements and provide attractive plantings throughout. Cochran was also instrumental in building a train line³³ and an electric plant to serve Edgewater³⁴ as well as founding a mortgage company that offered no-interest loans to qualified Edgewater buyers.³⁵

³¹ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 15, 3-4.

³² Advertisement found in Perry Duis, *Challenging Chicago: Coping with Everyday Life, 1837-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 78.

³³ Land values increased wherever new transit facilities were built. Homer Hoyt writes that in many instances, land values relied on only the promise of a transit line: “Nearly every subdivision was sold under the assurance that an elevated line or electric street-car line would run directly past the buyer’s lot, or as close as it would be desirable to have it run.” Hoyt, 149. Cochran appealed to Charles T. Yerkes, the president of North Chicago Street Railway Company and rail road tycoon of Chicago, for an extended street car or trolley line from Chicago to Edgewater, but Yerkes didn’t believe that the north shore was worth a street car or trolley line and refused to extend one to Edgewater. Undeterred, Cochran built the seven and half mile long train line himself, with financial help from Marshall Field, Sr., John J. Mitchell, Samuel Insull, and Charles L. Hutchinson. After the success of Edgewater was assured, Cochran sold the train line to Yerkes—at a substantial profit and with no small amount of satisfaction, one might assume. Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 11, 2-3.

³⁴ The Edgewater Light Company was built as much for advertisement as to provide electric light. Cochran built a power plant on Ardmore just west of the St. Paul tracks to provide street lighting and residential lighting. The street lighting was a somewhat bare-bones affair, with incandescent light bulbs strung across the street on two poles at decent intervals, with reflectors above. The empty houses in the development were lit each night to give an idea of occupancy to passengers on the St. Paul theater train. As a theatrical spectacle, one must wonder at the image that this provided: passengers riding home in the dark,

Another element in Cochran's vision was the construction of "artistic homes" that would set the standard for construction in Edgewater. He hired Joseph Lyman Silsbee, an architect who had recently moved to Chicago from Syracuse, New York, and has been credited with introducing the Shingle Style, then popular on the East Coast, to the Midwest. Silsbee designed ten speculative houses for Cochran on Edgewater's first two streets, five on Winthrop and five on Kenmore. The majority of these houses were completed in the fall and winter of 1886-1887.³⁶ All of them embodied the most fashionable trends in house design, fusing the broad triangular masses of the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles (then often referred to as "Colonial") in various designs of brick, stone, and wood.³⁷ The interiors contained the latest advances in plumbing and ventilation and boasted tinted walls and ceilings, elegant woodwork, and stained glass

witnessing the warmth of electric light emanating from the windows of these houses along the lake. According to an early resident, residents paid \$5 a month for all the electricity one could use. A Dr. Hotchkin, who bought the second home in Cochran's first subdivision, a frame house on the northwest corner of Catalpa and Kenmore, later recalled with gleeful pride, "I used to have forty-one lights in my house." (Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 14, 2) Eventually, Cochran sold the power plant to Commonwealth Edison, and prices went up. Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 13, 3.

³⁵ Cochran shrewdly realized that the desire of rising white-collar workers for a home would make the foundations of a good investment and he started First Mortgage Investment to attract sales and generate further profits. Publicity materials for his firm later explained, "Consequently when a man had a good piece of property and wanted to build a home, either to live in, himself, or to rent, he could readily obtain the money from Mr. Cochran by putting up the property as first mortgage security." Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 11, 3.

³⁶ In the first several years, Cochran continued this pattern of ten houses per year, scattered across the development rather than in a contiguous row.

³⁷ One of Silsbee's draftsmen when he worked for Cochran was a young Frank Lloyd Wright; the homes Silsbee designed for Cochran during this period, "with their dramatic and dominant gables," had a great influence on Wright and inspired in him an interest in residential architecture. Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 248. Wright would write in his autobiography that a colleague, Cecil Corwin, said of Silsbee, "He's an architectural genius spoiled by the way of the aristocrat." Wright agreed, but added, "I adored Silsbee just the same. He had style." Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (Petaluma, CA: Pomegranate Communications, Inc., 2005 [1941]), 71. By 1890, Cochran had broken with Silsbee and turned to another of his former draftsmen, George Washington Maher, for spec designs.



Figure 14. One of the speculative houses designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee for Edgewater. From *American Architecture: A History*, collection of author Leland M. Roth.

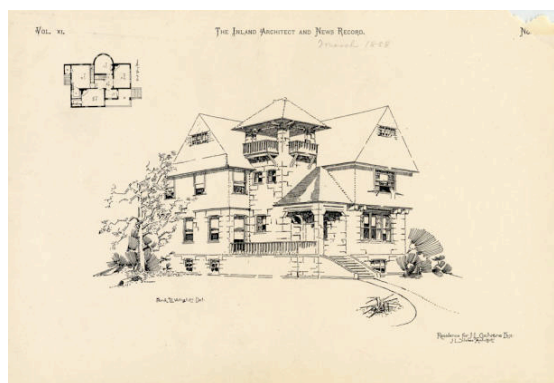


Figure 15. Silsbee design for Edgewater printed in *The Inland Architect and News Record*. Note the prominent triangular shapes and consistent massing. Art Institute of Chicago Archival Image Collection.

windows by Tiffany & Company. Advertisements for Edgewater bragged, “Every convenience suggested by modern development has been introduced and no expense spared to make them complete in every detail.”³⁸ While later buyers were free to hire their own architects, Cochran reserved the right to overrule homes that did not fit the prototype; another advertisement for Edgewater cautioned, “Lots are sold only to purchasers agreeing to build houses which will compare favorably in price and character to those already completed.”³⁹

Silsbee was also responsible for Edgewater’s public buildings, which incorporated the design idiom of the early houses. In 1886, Cochran successfully petitioned the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad for a passenger stop at Edgewater. Because the railroad station constituted the entrance point into the suburban landscape, its style was particularly important, and Silsbee designed a Shingle Style building of wood and stone

³⁸ Display Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 3, 1887, 5.

³⁹ Display Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1887, 5.

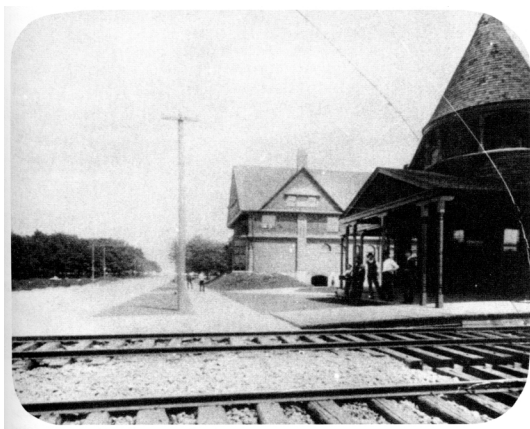


Figure 16. Edgewater's railroad depot, foreground, designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee. Guild Hall is in the background, with no other buildings in sight. From Chicago: City of Neighborhoods.



Figure 17. Guild Hall, designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee. Its style and massing mirrored the speculative homes that Silsbee designed for Cochran in the late 1880's. From Chicago: City of Neighborhoods.

to complement the houses. Under Cochran's direction, Silsbee also designed a two and a half story, brick and shingle town hall at the southwest corner of Winthrop and Bryn Mawr, next door to the train station. Cochran called this building "Guild Hall" and it was meant to serve both commercial and social uses. On its first floor, Guild Hall held the first stores in Edgewater, Clifton Cleaners and the Edgewater Grocery, run by James McManus. The second floor included a long hall for hosting community meetings, which also eventually served as Edgewater's first schoolroom and, later, a meeting place for new churches.⁴⁰ A description of Guild Hall's situation, "set on a rise of land left from the leveling of rolling sand dunes that formed the original landscape along the lakeshore," gives a sense of the initial aspect of the entire Edgewater development.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 13, 4.

⁴¹ Cleaners and grocery names come from a letter sent by the Edgewater Historical Society to the Chicago Landmarks Commission supporting the inclusion of Bryn Mawr on the National Register of Historic Places, 1995. Printed in *Edgewater Historical Society Newsletter* VIII, no. 2 (1997).

By New Year's Day, 1887, Cochran had built the architecturally coherent beginnings of a small but prosperous-looking community: ten spacious and elegant homes, two stores in Guild Hall, and the railroad station. These buildings sat on otherwise empty swathes of paved and landscaped streets, giving only intimations of the full possibilities that an investment in Edgewater presented to potential buyers. All in all, Cochran claimed that he had expended more than \$375,000 to build this new suburb with its veritable cornucopia of improvements.⁴² Keeping in mind the model communities of the Philadelphia Main Line towns, he created certain restrictions intended to keep negative influences out of Edgewater.⁴³ Real estate agent Paul Swartzlose explained: "Cochran did not want apartments, but private homes, he made his buyers sign regular warranty deeds saying that they contracted to build 'a single private dwelling house.' This strictly prohibited flats and tenements [for a period of twenty five years]."⁴⁴ Cochran also enacted a permanent liquor restriction on the development to quash the construction of saloons.

Cochran was an ingenious advertiser and promoter, a requisite for successful developers: "the marketing of lots in a subdivision required an organized sales campaign on the part of a professional subdivider, whose propaganda was chiefly responsible for

⁴² Margaret Garb, *City of American Dreams: A History of Home Ownership and Housing Reform in Chicago, 1871-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 137.

⁴³ Kathy Gemperle of the Edgewater Historical Society provided this insight regarding Cochran's inspiration from the Main Line communities.

⁴⁴ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 13, 2.



Figure 18. Print advertisement for Edgewater, 1887. It touts “Electric Lights” and “Pure Lake Water” as advantages of Edgewater, as well as providing an image of one of Silsbee’s homes under the distinct Edgewater typeface. Chicago Daily Tribune.

the high level of prices obtained for the lots.”⁴⁵ Cochran paid for the name “Edgewater” to be printed in the newspaper for weeks on end in a distinctive typeface that became a kind of trademark, then published maps showing how to get to Edgewater from Lincoln Park.

Different advertisements appeared every day, sometimes with pictures of Silsbee’s model homes, often with testimonials from satisfied buyers. These testimonials illustrated the superlative nature of the new subdivision:

“Edgewater property is unquestionably the most eligible suburban site. The high character of the improvements render it a most attractive and delightful place to locate”;
 “The houses are the finest I ever saw built for sale.”⁴⁶

Several endorsements stressed the resale value of the

homes and the soundness of an investment in Edgewater: W.H. Barlett claimed satisfaction in knowing “that my home is consistently increasing in value,”⁴⁷ while C.L. Rising stated: “I am very much pleased with my Edgewater purchase and with the future prospects of our beautiful suburb. Indications point strongly in favor of the statement made by you during early negotiations—that Edgewater would surely become the model

⁴⁵ Hoyt, 163.

⁴⁶ Display Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1887, 5.

⁴⁷ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 12, 2.

suburb of the West.”⁴⁸ Such advertising gambits paid off. In the early days of the suburb, at a time when center-city lots were rarely more than twenty feet wide, Cochran sold fifty-foot wide lots for \$40 on Kenmore and \$30 on Winthrop, farther from the lake. Many customers bought two lots, with some buying even four. By October, 1888, “[i]n aristocratic Edgewater there were 200 people where there had been none in 1886.”⁴⁹

In 1887, the same year that the first houses from Cochran’s Edgewater subdivision went on the market, Cochran purchased the land north of Bryn Mawr to a point half way between what would become Ardmore and Thorndale, creating his First Addition to Edgewater. Then, in 1889, he bought the land north to Devon, creating a Second Addition. Cochran prevailed upon the St. Paul Railroad to build a second stop for North Edgewater at Granville and induced the train to stop here twice a day, at a station then called Flaxon.⁵⁰ These additions to Edgewater—and the increased accessibility to the land made possible by two train stops—would prove to be Cochran’s master stroke. He sold a million dollars worth of property in the year before the World Columbian Exposition in 1893. Edgewater had made Cochran a very wealthy man.

⁴⁸ Display Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 8, 1888, 5.

⁴⁹ Hoyt, 161.

⁵⁰ The first home in these two additions to Edgewater—the community that would come to be called North Edgewater—was not constructed until 1890. Eventually, larger, finer residences were to be built in North Edgewater, which had “more gorgeous homes...particularly on Sheridan Road....One man had a swimming pool and an underground passage connecting it with his home which was on another lot.” Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 13, 9. In 1893, Cochran purchased the land west of Evanston to Southport (now Glenview), between Foster and Bryn Mawr, his Third Addition to Edgewater. This area, now the Lakewood-Balmoral neighborhood, was intended for middle class customers of more modest means.

Edgewater's Early Residents

Sociologists observe that Americans tend to construct communal and personal identity in spatial terms, through class segregation and the subsequent creation of institutions that define a community. Bonnie Lindstrom has noted particularly how Americans have historically chosen homes in suburban communities that “simultaneously [locate them] with others who share their values and preferences and [assert] their social status and social identity to others.”⁵¹ She stresses the symbolic nature of the home environment, “a world in which a person can create a material environment that embodies what he or she considers significant.”⁵² Important institutional symbols in the larger built environment further legitimize the class and social distinctions upon which such communities are built.

Edgewater emerged at a time when suburban developments more and more came to be distinguished from one another by a hierarchical scale of amenities and “improvements” that paralleled economic and social distinctions among property buyers.⁵³ Edgewater’s residents were of the upwardly mobile middle-classes, American born, and eager to escape the density and congestion of the city. Edgewater, then, was in many ways the archetypal late nineteenth century suburb “where educated and moderately successful men made their homes,” a place where they hoped to cement their

⁵¹ Bonnie Lindstrom, “A Sense of Place: Housing Selection on Chicago’s North Shore,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1997): 20.

⁵² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 123, quoted in Lindstrom, 21.

⁵³ See Keating, *Building Chicago*.

status.⁵⁴ One early resident sketched the nature of the community: “All the people in Edgewater used to work down town because there was no business here. It was purely a residential village.”⁵⁵ J.H. Hecht, an Edgewater real estate agent, recalled, “The people who bought in this subdivision were of a good class;”⁵⁶ another early observer described Edgewater’s men as “typical Chicagoans, perhaps I should say Americans. They were business and professional men of all sorts.”⁵⁷ Even the wealthier buyers of the high-priced lots on Sheridan Road were deemed respectable: “The people who bought on Sheridan Road were never of the highest racy class of society, but were conservative, well-to-do, home-loving people.”⁵⁸

In the early days the area was still somewhat remote, but the inconvenience and isolation of Edgewater was outweighed by the expansive space that suburban living allowed. Chick Evans, a golfer who grew up in nearby Rogers Park, later described the landscape of his childhood: “All the houses in our new neighborhood were detached, each boasted a considerable back yard...There were, too, many blocks innocent of all buildings, and looking towards the lake there was much wooded space.”⁵⁹ He also recalled the pervasive presence of families: “It seemed to be a neighborhood of children. Most of the families were like ours, I judge, and had left the more crowded portions of

⁵⁴ Edwin Balmer, *The Breath of Scandal* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1921), 49.

⁵⁵ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 14, 3.

⁵⁶ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 17, 2.

⁵⁷ Charles Evans, *Chick Evans’ Golf Book: The Story of the Sporting Battles of the Greatest of All Golfers* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1921), 302.

⁵⁸ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 15, 3. John L. Cochran, Jr. is the informant.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the city in order to give their children room to grow.”⁶⁰ A real estate agent acknowledged that as of a result of Edgewater’s remote location, “[t]he people who lived on the north side used to be twitted for their poor transportation and slowness” but explained that they “did not mind the inconveniences of living out farther, since they were away from the noise and unpleasantness of factories.”⁶¹

This remoteness had the added advantage of contributing an air of exclusivity to Edgewater. Many of Edgewater’s first families were of old American Protestant stock, who desired to separate themselves from less exalted demographic groups in the city. Edwin Balmer, a novelist who grew up in Edgewater, later described the “[o]ld American families [who] lived here...families of Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York State upbringing and tradition and, particularly, from such old Puritan towns as Salem. The impulse of the pioneer as well as the blood of the Puritan descended to them who built their separated, independent homes.”⁶² The open land of the unfinished development imparted a sense of aristocratic privilege to the early settlers of Edgewater: “Although their little streets did not always meet others, it gave residents the feeling of being on private driveways.”⁶³ Such a sense of privilege extended to the “neighborhood cliques...[that] stood for many different things” among north side boys: “[t]he Edgewater boys thought themselves a little better” than the rest.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Evans, 23.

⁶¹ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 15, 2. Again, John L. Cochran, Jr. is the informant.

⁶² Balmer, 199-200.

⁶³ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 15, 2.

⁶⁴ Evans, 28, 41.

As a result, a substantial attraction of Edgewater was the social status that residence in “the most beautiful suburban hamlet of this great city” conferred upon home owners.⁶⁵ This status was directly linked to the quality of the houses and the extent of amenities provided. As Daniel Bluestone has observed, “to an unprecedented degree, America’s middle class defined itself in terms of its possessions, appearances, and built environment. As the nineteenth century progressed, the consumption of numerous tastefully embellished consumer items became increasingly important to middle-class Chicagoans.”⁶⁶

Middle class Chicagoans of the late nineteenth century also viewed traditional Protestant values as a mark of social status. Fine churches—like parks—were seen as evidence of prosperity and respectability and were used by developers to attract further growth and promote greater investment in the areas that surrounded them. In residential districts across the city, it was necessary for the church to be just as fine as the houses surrounding it, so that it would not appear that the priorities of the congregation were misplaced. Therefore, it was only natural that soon after Edgewater’s first residents took possession of their homes, demands would surface for a church to validate the moral aspirations of the suburban ideal, and, furthermore, that such a church would measure up to the high architectural and aesthetic standards set by Silsbee’s early designs. These appeals found the full backing of Cochran, who “encouraged the formation of social

⁶⁵ Display Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1887, 5.

⁶⁶ Daniel Bluestone, *Constructing Chicago* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 96.

groups and organization of churches” as a means toward increasing the value of his own investment.⁶⁷

The Church of the Atonement

Cochran laid out lots in Edgewater in 1886, and homes opened for purchase in early 1887. The first church-going residents attended services in Ravenswood, but by 1888 enough buyers had taken possession of their homes for some residents to desire religious services closer to home. On June 17, almost sixty people assembled at Guild Hall for Episcopal worship, a gathering that set into motion the organization of a new congregation that was supported by Cochran, himself a practicing Episcopalian. By fall, in his yearly address to the diocesan convention, Episcopal Bishop William McClaren mentioned as one of two “unorganized missions as yet unnamed” a north side mission under the patronage of St. James Church, the prosperous downtown church of which Cochran was a member.⁶⁸ Frederic W. Keator, at that time as practicing lawyer turned lay reader, was called from his position at the mission of St. Peter’s Church to help form the new Edgewater mission, soon called the Church of the Atonement. In the fall of 1889 members of the congregation prevailed upon Keator to quit practicing law and enter the Lane Theological Seminary in preparation for becoming their full-time pastor.

The establishment of an Episcopal church, as opposed to another Protestant denomination, spoke directly to the social class and material prosperity of the people who

⁶⁷ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 15, 3-4.

⁶⁸ “Thirteenth Annual Address of the Rt. Rev. William Edward McLaren, D.D., D.C.L., Bishop of Chicago,” *Journal of the Fifty-First Annual Convention of the Diocese of Chicago* (Chicago: Skeen & Stuart Stationery Co., 1888), 39.

had settled in Edgewater. Howell Williams has noted that the “traditional geographic presence” of Episcopal churches “has been in urban areas...near concentrations of wealth and influence.”⁶⁹ In the years after the Civil War, after a period of falling behind in growth to the aggressively proselytizing Methodists and Presbyterians, the denomination enjoyed a resurgent following among the prosperous members of society, as “significant numbers of wealthy Americans were attracted to the stability of a denomination that still represented English customs and ecclesiastical traditions.”⁷⁰ A nineteenth-century historian explained how the external trappings of the church drew the upper classes: “The beautiful liturgy and imposing ritual of the Episcopal Church, as well as the wealth and fashion of some of its adherents, and the gorgeous architecture of many of its church edifices, have drawn to its worship...large numbers of the fashionable and worldly.”⁷¹ The elite nature of Episcopalianism testifies to the social position of Edgewater residents; in direct contrast to the open non-sectarianism of Ravenswood Congregational during its first decades, the establishment of an Episcopalian parish indicates a more exclusive mindset in the religious sphere.

Movement toward the construction of a building for Church of the Atonement began around this time, when Cochran offered the Episcopal mission group a valuable corner lot in North Edgewater, at Ardmore and Kenmore, free of charge. He also donated \$3,000 toward the cost of the building, on condition that the congregation would raise the

⁶⁹ Howell Williams, “Episcopalians,” in *Class in America: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert E. Weir (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 235.

⁷⁰ David Hein and Gardiner H. Shattuck, *The Episcopalians* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 85.

⁷¹ Henry Barnard, “History and Progress of the Different Denominations,” *American Journal of Education*, Vol 32 (1882): 1039.

remainder of the funds through subscription. Cochran's financial generosity—particularly the donation of a prime corner lot—speaks to the value he placed on establishing a church in Edgewater. Prescriptive literature for church architecture of the time called for highly visible church sites. One architectural manual instructed, "Churches should occupy the most prominent position in every village or city... as a continual reminder of the existence of a Christian community recognizing their dependence upon the Almighty Ruler and their desires to do him service by erecting in their midst houses consecrated to his worship."⁷² Another manual counseled that the site be "central and convenient of access" above all other considerations: "Better pay full price for a lot in a central locality, than to accept one as a gift at one side of the population."⁷³ In the gridded streets of a flat subdivision like Edgewater, a prominent corner just off the lake would have been the most visible site available.

The substantial head start provided by Cochran to the new congregation's building fund—in addition to the financial resources of its earliest members—allowed leaders of the new mission to bypass the ordinary first step of church construction, a small frame building.⁷⁴ Instead, the committee-in-charge of the Church of the Atonement commissioned one of the most prominent young architects in Chicago, Henry Ives Cobb, to design a noteworthy church building that would express their aspirations for

⁷² Sidney J. Osgood, *Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Dean Printing and Publishing, 1893), 3.

⁷³ F.E. Kidder, *Churches and Chapels* (New York: William T. Comstock, 1895), 9.

⁷⁴ The committee-in-charge was headed by Frederic W. Keator and included A.T.H. Brower, D.B. Linsted, John McKillop, and William H. Pretymen. A.T.H. Brower was "a prosperous businessman in the printing-press and type-founders trade." (Mrs. Brower, a native of Georgia, was a cousin of Woodrow Wilson.) Daniel B. Linsted was the Western Agent for the Central Vermont line of steamers; John McKillop was western manager for the John W. Ealy Blue Book; and William H. Pretymen was a prominent interior decorator. Herbert E. Fleming, "The Literary Interests of Chicago," *The American Journal of Sociology* XI, no. 6 (May 1906): 808; Display Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 8, 1888, 29.

Edgewater.⁷⁵ In many ways, Cobb was perfect for the job. In 1889, he was in the process of designing a large Shingle Style summer house for himself on 175 acres in the North Shore suburb of Lake Forest. Such a house reflected his own position of high status within the Chicago architectural community as well as his familiarity with the design idiom already established in Edgewater.⁷⁶ At that time, Cobb was also bringing his plan for the Newberry Library to fruition and had positioned himself to win the commission for the new University of Chicago campus the following year. Daniel Bluestone observes that these projects exemplify Cobb's experience in "linking cultural concerns and architectural forms" in a way that "affirmed Western traditions of beauty and culture in distinctive and monumental form," an expertise that would serve the Church of the Atonement well.⁷⁷

Only thirty years old in 1889, Cobb had gained a reputation for designing in the Romanesque and Victorian Gothic styles. His 1882-83 design, in association with Charles Sumner Frost, of the Potter Palmer mansion on Lake Shore Drive resulted in accolades for the firm Cobb and Frost and garnered residential commissions from Chicago's fashionable set. Cobb was further qualified for church design because of a period of study of acoustics with Dankmar Adler, considered one of the foremost

⁷⁵ An Englishman, Pretymen (variously spelled Prettyman) had executed the interior decorations in an earlier Cobb project, the Perry H. Smith House on Astor Street, in 1887. This association between Pretymen and Cobb may have been the impetus that led the congregation to invite Cobb to submit plans for the church, and Cobb's other commissions in Chicago would have provided an attractive company for the new Edgewater church. This conjecture was advanced by John Waters, the resident historian at the Church of the Atonement, in conversation on November 16, 2008.

⁷⁶ Kim Coventry, Daniel Meyer, and Arthur H. Miller, *Classic Country Estates of Lake Forest: Architecture and Landscape Design, 1856-1940* (self-published, 2003), 64.

⁷⁷ Bluestone, 72.

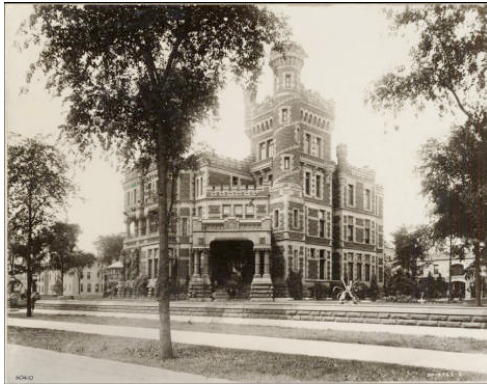


Figure 19. The Potter Palmer mansion on Lake Shore Drive. This commission made Henry Ives Cobb's reputation among Chicago's elites. Scoring Cobb's participation in the design of a small suburban church would have been a coup for the planners of the Church of the Atonement. The Art Institute of Chicago, Historic Architecture and Landscape Image Collection.

acoustics experts in Chicago architecture.⁷⁸ Cobb split from Frost to devote himself to the design of the Newberry Library in 1888 and would go it alone in the design of Church of the Atonement, which he designed while also working on the Newberry.

Cobb himself was not a native Midwesterner; few architects in Chicago—so lately a prairie town—were. He was born to a prominent family in Brookline, Massachusetts, a well-to-do suburb of Boston, in 1859.⁷⁹ After spending one year at MIT and three years at the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard University, he received his architecture degree in 1881 and joined the Boston architecture firm Peabody and Stearns. Cobb quickly set about establishing his professional reputation, entering a competition to design the Union Club in Chicago in 1882. Upon winning this commission, he left Boston to make his name in Chicago. By 1889, he had already designed the Chicago Historical Society and—with Frost—another church, the Lake Forest Presbyterian Church (1886). He would later design the Gothic buildings for the original University of

⁷⁸ With Louis Sullivan, Adler would later design the famed Auditorium Theater in Chicago.

⁷⁹ In Massachusetts, Cobb's paternal grandmother, Augusta Adams Cobb, had achieved a measure of notoriety in the early 1840's when she left her husband and seven of her nine children to become a plural wife of Brigham Young. Her husband had sued her for divorce in a Boston court, exposing the new Mormon doctrine of plural marriage in a sensational public trial.

Chicago, the Chicago Federal Building, the Fisheries Building at the Columbian Exposition, and the Chicago Opera House.

Cobb's short experience at Peabody and Stearns would have prepared him well for the high-profile projects he would win in Chicago and one can glean insight into his design of Church of the Atonement from the Boston firm's work in the 1880's. After H.H. Richardson's death in 1886, Peabody and Stearns was the foremost architecture firm in Boston, occupying a position analogous to McKim, Mead, and White in New York City at the same time. Architectural historian Wheaton Holden notes that in the early 1880's, Robert S. Peabody became interested in "the small country churches of medieval England," an interest that is evident in the firm's church designs throughout the decade.⁸⁰ Cobb would certainly have been aware of such an interest and it may have influenced his own church designs.

"Low, rambling English country-type churches" already had a long history in the United States prior to Peabody's fascination with them.⁸¹ The first American churches modeled on the English parish church originated in the full flush of Gothic Revival in the 1840's and 1850's, but continued to reappear in suburbs later in the century, "sanctioned by tradition and familiarity."⁸² Several factors account for the style's popularity. The American suburban ideal entailed, at least in part, a romantic vision of the country life of

⁸⁰ Wheaton A. Holden, "The Peabody Touch: Peabody and Stearns of Boston, 1870-1917," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32, no. 2 (1973), 119. Peabody's contributions to the genre include First Parish, Weston, Massachusetts (1886) and Christ Church, Waltham, Massachusetts (1897-98).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸² Phoebe B. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 215. For a more detailed history of the earliest English parish churches in the United States, see the entirety of Chapter VI: "Some Buildings and Architects of the American Gothic and Parish Church Revivals."

the English aristocracy.⁸³ Roger Guy notes that the “search for a more pastoral ideal of a previous landed gentry in England drove the growth, shape, and form of newly emerging suburbs in the United States.”⁸⁴ The English parish church-type symbolically legitimized such pastoral and aristocratic aims: “a sense of adherence to a venerable English tradition was...a way of asserting an alternative to the various ethnicities rising in prominence and power...[and a way] to assert Anglo-American identity and to glorify a heritage shared with England.”⁸⁵ The parish church also created an air of faux-permanence in brand new suburban settlements; as opposed to more modern styles, “Gothic revival indulged in [the]...fantasy” that the buildings were ancient.⁸⁶ Finally, as Phoebe B. Stanton notes in her seminal work on American Gothic Revival church architecture, “[t]he English parish church was not bewildering, complex, and overwhelming; it was small enough and simple enough to be copied exactly.”⁸⁷ Interest in the *exact* reproduction of centuries-old Gothic churches was a somewhat new phenomenon in the 1880’s and 1890’s, however. Holden observes that after a prolonged excursion into Gothic eclecticism by American architects, “Peabody’s work represented a return to the more archaeological side of the earlier period.”⁸⁸

⁸³ Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley*, 196; Stilgoe, 28-31.

⁸⁴ Roger Guy, *From Diversity to Unity: Southern and Appalachian Migrants in Uptown Chicago, 1950-1970* (City: Lexington Books, 2007), 31.

⁸⁵ Kieckhefer, 204.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁸⁷ Stanton, 214

⁸⁸ Holden, 119.

Cobb's design for Church of the Atonement drew on the archaeological impulses seen in Peabody's work. Church members touted the origins of their own building in "an English church of which ours is an almost exact reproduction."⁸⁹ Just as earlier frame churches like Ravenswood Congregational had mimicked the modest clapboard homes by which they were surrounded, Atonement's imposing exterior complemented the substantial homes by which it was or soon would be surrounded. The rusticated façade of Atonement was of a rich red-brown sandstone from Darlington, Wisconsin, cut into blocks of unequal size. A massive square bell tower—thirty six feet tall—juttied out from



Figure 20. Cobb's design for the Church of the Atonement. The rendering emphasizes the prominence of the square tower. The Art Institute of Chicago Archival Image Collection.

the northwest corner of the main structure and contained the main entrance to the church, while a large stained glass window dominated the front façade. To the north and west of the church was a landscaped lawn. Behind the church, to the east, the open land along Sheridan Road provided a clear view of the lake, an example of the "romantic picturesqueness" for which Cobb was renowned.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *The Clarion*, April 1900, Vol. 2 No. 1, 5-6. The interest in exact replication of Gothic churches was actually forward-looking. Rather than being a late manifestation of the mid-nineteenth century popularity of the Gothic Revival, which mimicked aspects of Gothic without complete design coherence in the interior, it is more accurately a precursor to the Neo-Gothic style that became fashionable in the twentieth century, in which both interior and exterior followed the precepts of medieval Gothic design. Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 204-207.

⁹⁰ Montgomery Schuyler, "Henry Ives Cobb," *The Architectural Record* (February 1896), 103.

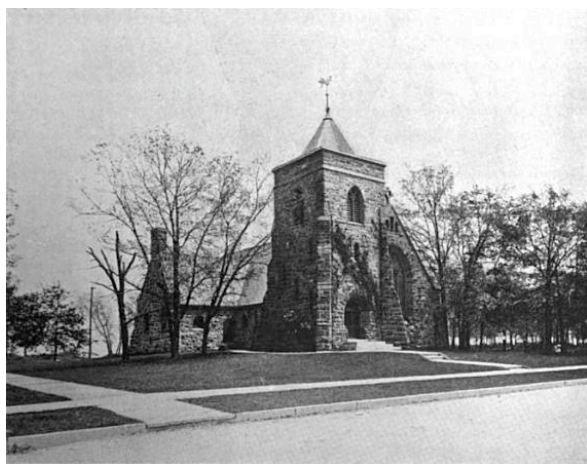


Figure 21. The Church of the Atonement soon after its completion. Facing Kenmore Avenue with Lake Michigan in the background, it evoked the pastoral setting of an ancient English parish church. The Art Institute of Chicago Archival Image Collection.

Atonement's interior featured a highly traditional floor plan. Oriented to the east, the church measured 80 feet long by 36 feet wide.⁹¹ The door in the tower at the west end of the church opened into the nave, where a baptismal font symbolized one's entrance into the church through baptism. Buttresses divided the walls into four bays, each with a Gothic window of diamond-paned leaded glass. A single aisle traversed the nave of the church, leading to the chancel and altar at the east end of the building. The south wall near the chancel featured a small door to the exterior. Wooden planking ran from the eaves to the high peak of the ceiling, following the slope of the roof and supported by four exposed wood trusses. Central to the sanctuary was the pulpit, the provenance of which—"an old English example of carved oak bearing the date 1615 and coming from an ancient church in Shropshire"—reinforced a sense of antiquity.⁹² Congregation member William Pretyman, a well-known Chicago decorator with a reputation as a

⁹¹ On traditional Anglican parishes in the United States, see Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986), 47-91.

⁹² "Built in the Early Gothic Style," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 22, 1890, 9.

colorist, executed murals on the chancel and side wall, which formed the dominant decorative motif of the church.⁹³

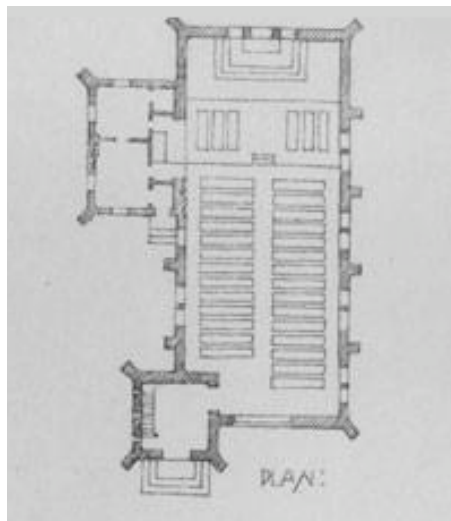


Figure 22. The floor plan of the Church of the Atonement. With the entry at the west end of the building, the altar at the east end, and a divided chancel and apse, the plan replicated the traditional layout for Anglican churches. The Art Institute of Chicago Archival Image Collection.

The traditional straight pew arrangement of Church of the Atonement, with two rows flanking a central aisle, rejected the trend toward auditorium-style audience rooms in Protestant churches that had prevailed throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Influential liturgical movements in England during the nineteenth century had created a renewed vogue for liturgy in the American Episcopal church and wide central aisles, while bad for preaching, are indispensable for liturgy. The length of Atonement's central aisle marked it as a congregation that favored at least a degree of high church liturgy. In the twentieth century, this vogue would spread into the other mainstream

⁹³ "In decorative art, William Pretyman...stands alone in breadth of intellect, in range and power of imagination, and in comprehension of the use and beauty of color." Lucy B. Monroe, "Art In Chicago," *The New England Magazine* VI, no. 4 (1892), 423. John Root, of the firm Burnham and Root, designed Pretyman's house in Edgewater and the two men were close friends. On Root's recommendation, Pretyman was named the Director of Color for the Columbian Exposition. After Root's premature death in 1892, Daniel Burnham overruled Pretyman's choice of a luminous ivory for the fair's buildings in favor of white and Pretyman resigned in protest. Jon A. Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 66.

Protestant denominations and influence church design, but in 1890 Protestant liturgy was still mostly confined to Episcopal and high Lutheran churches.

Cobb's design for the Church of the Atonement received much publicity, most notably a November 9, 1889, article in *American Architect and Building News* with an image of the planned structure. Newspaper accounts included a sketch of the proposed design and forecasted the cost of the church at \$10,000.⁹⁴ It was reported that \$6,000 had been already subscribed by the church's membership and others—including \$3,000 from Cochran himself—at the time of the cornerstone laying in December. After its construction, local newspapers extolled the Church of the Atonement as “one of the most beautiful church buildings in the country” and acknowledged the origins of its design, “modeled after an English country church.”⁹⁵

The English Gothic antecedents of the Church of the Atonement spoke not only to the fashion of the times, but to belie the newness of the subdivision. The fact that Atonement's first building was a substantial stone structure, with no initial frame starter church, attests to the wealth of the congregation and their confidence in the success of the Edgewater development. Its Episcopal denominational identification also clearly marked it as a church for the better classes, and beyond satisfying the liturgical demands of the service, the traditionalism of the Church of the Atonement's building exemplified the social aspirations of its members. In a brand new suburb of only a few dozen houses, this heavy stone structure created a sense of antiquity and stability. For rising white-collar professionals, its stylistic ties to the ancient parishes of rural England bequeathed a sense

⁹⁴ “Edgewater Episcopalians Active,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 1, 1889, 2.

⁹⁵ “Built in the Early Gothic Style,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 22, 1890, 9.

of long heritage and ancestral legitimacy. Furthermore, its rural design and bucolic setting on the lake placed it clearly outside of the city and the deleterious influences therein. Finally, like the houses designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee, the Church of the Atonement provided a high architectural standard for the housing stock to be built in the new suburb; designed by Henry Ives Cobb, one of the foremost architects of the city, its appearance granted significant social cache upon not only its members, but all residents of Edgewater.

A Crowded Cultural Landscape

The Church of the Atonement constructed a building that explicitly linked it to John Cochran's vision for his development and to the social aspirations of Edgewater's residents. However, the church did not dominate the place identity of Edgewater in the same way that Ravenswood Congregational had influenced the place identity of Ravenswood. Instead, one might say that the market identity of Edgewater shaped the Church of the Atonement. Astute businessman that he was, Cochran realized that for many prospective buyers infrastructural improvements, material amenities, and convenient transportation networks were not enough. His interest in the establishment of Church of the Atonement should be seen as only part of a profusion of amenities that Cochran offered his buyers.

Another church, Epworth Methodist Episcopal, laid its cornerstone on June 22, 1890, the day after the dedication services at the Church of the Atonement.⁹⁶ Epworth,

⁹⁶ During the services, a speaker, Reverend Frank M. Bristol, praised the "restful location with not a house anywhere in sight." Not everyone was so enthusiastic; early on, Epworth Methodist Episcopal was referred to as "Slocum's Folly," after L.T.M. Slocum, one of three charter members, who insisted on

only blocks south of Atonement on Kenmore Avenue, had also been the beneficiary of Cochran's generosity, receiving both its lot and a substantial donation toward the building fund. With a heavy square tower at the corner and a rusticated stone facade, it too affected the rural parish ideal, in a hybrid style of Richardsonian Romanesque and early Arts and Crafts. Built of rough, heavy boulders and with an entrance decorated with cut stone and carved ornamentation, Epworth presented the same façade of age, solidity, and permanence as the Church of the Atonement, but for a congregation with less liturgical, more evangelical leanings.⁹⁷

While these churches visibly expressed elegance and status, they did not form the main social nexus of Edgewater life, as Ravenswood Congregational had in Ravenswood. Part of the attraction of elite suburbs and subdivisions was the sense of predictability and security that grew out of social selectivity. Ownership in the subdivision was a preliminary social filter. Church membership served as a secondary filter, but by the early 1890's an even more select social filter, the club, had usurped the central place of the church in exclusive suburbs around Chicago: "To some extent, the club assumed the role of social center in many towns. Operating out of sometimes elaborate clubhouses, clubs sponsored athletic and literary groups, dances, holiday parties, outings, and 'closed

building the church in an empty development. "Thousands Fill Church's Quiet Prairie of 1890," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 24, 1929, 11.

⁹⁷ Epworth's interior diverged from the plan of the more liturgically-oriented Church of the Atonement, instead featuring the popular auditorium-style seating with a capacity of 400. Sunday School rooms opened onto the main auditorium with sliding doors to expand capacity if needed. The interior decorations were simple, with art glass windows providing light in the sanctuary. In contrast to the high-profile architectural hire of Henry Ives Cobb for the Church of the Atonement, Epworth Methodist was designed by congregation member Frederick B. Townshend. The church was Townsend's largest commission, and he both donated his time to the enterprise and subscribed to the construction fund. The entire edifice and site cost around \$35,000. Ibid.; Epworth Methodist Church, "History," www.epworthchicago.org/enter (accessed November 21, 2005).

theatricals' whose audiences were composed only of other members."⁹⁸ All of these activities had taken place under the auspices of the church in older commuter suburbs like Ravenswood, but now they were relegated to a network of hierarchical club memberships. Cochran thoroughly supported the establishment of clubs in Edgewater, and by the late 1890's the suburb boasted the Edgewater Club,⁹⁹ the Edgewater Golf Club, the Edgewater Gun Club, the Edgewater Boat Club, the Edgewater Tennis Club, and the elite Saddle and Cycle Club, all of which catered to "Edgewater society."¹⁰⁰ Though he never lived in Edgewater, Cochran himself joined the Edgewater Club and the Saddle and Cycle Club.

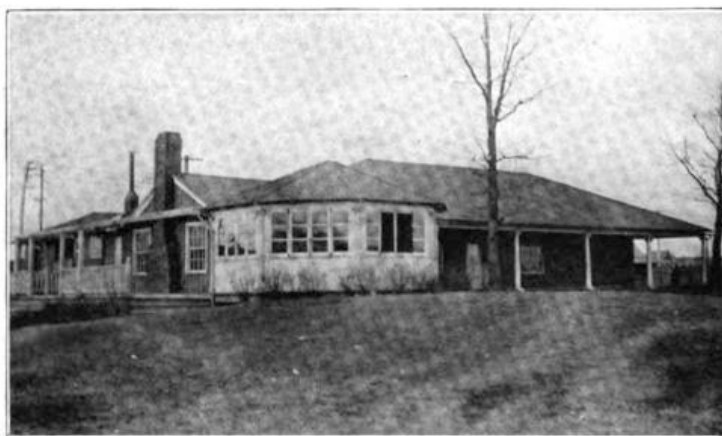


Figure 23. The exterior of the Edgewater Golf Club's first clubhouse. This clubhouse was rather utilitarian structure, which paled in comparison to later clubhouses, particularly the Casino of the Edgewater Club, which was designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee. From Chick Evans' Golf Book.

⁹⁸ Duis, 72.

⁹⁹ The Edgewater Club was one of the first social clubs to be established by Edgewater residents. By 1892, they had constructed a clubhouse—the Edgewater Casino—only a block away from the Church of the Atonement, designed by Joseph Lyman Silsbee, a member. It featured two bowling alleys, two dressing rooms, two toilet-rooms for ladies, a dancing hall, billiard room, card-room, and reception hall. It was to be “a regular family club,” with liquor and gambling prohibited. Regular gatherings, both entertainments and community meetings, took place at the Edgewater Casino. “To Be Finished By Christmas Eve,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 15, 1892, 9.

¹⁰⁰ An advantage of some of these elite clubs lay in the fact that membership transcended geographical boundaries. The Edgewater Country Club, for example, allowed its members to associate with the crème de la crème of Chicago's moneyed society, whether these families lived in Edgewater or not. Members of the Edgewater Golf Club came from all over the city to play on “well-drained greens that could be played even after the heaviest rains... [at] the most accessible of all the Chicago courses,” at the very end of the streetcar tracks. Evans, 299.

With the establishment of so many clubs, Cochran's financial interest in church building waned, and other prospective congregations were left to their own devices. By 1900, two more churches emerged in Edgewater. After meeting at the Edgewater Club quarters for a year, Edgewater's Presbyterians constructed a modest frame structure on a rented lot on Winthrop in 1897. Meanwhile, the Catholic mission, St. Ita, worshiped at Guild Hall until its own frame church was completed in 1901. These churches joined Atonement and Epworth in publicity for the Edgewater development, but only as part of a growing variety of social amenities. An undated booklet from the early 1900's included "[p]ictures of the golf grounds, of the Presbyterian and Catholic frame churches and the Methodist and Episcopal brick churches," all on equal terms, all a possible place to spend a Sunday morning.¹⁰¹

Church Life

Other factors also contributed to the marginalization of church life at Church of the Atonement. By the turn of the twentieth century, suburban churches had gained a reputation for structural elegance and lackluster congregational participation. In 1904, Isabelle Horton, the Superintendent of Social and Educational Work at the Halsted Street Institutional Church in Chicago, described the stereotypical suburban church: "The family church of the well-to-do suburban districts is, even in outward seeming, handsome, decorous and dignified. Its air of prosperity extends from stained glass

¹⁰¹ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 12, 4.

116
windows to carpeted pew. Its people come from homes equally tasteful and refined.”¹⁰²

Some observers saw the ease of suburban living as contributing to a laxity in spiritual practice: “Suburban church work is a difficult thing, because it is hard to get people ‘waked up’ to the importance in their lives of the spiritual emphasis. This is particularly true in...a beautiful, clean, happy, well-nourished community. People are satisfied to be what they are.” For this reason, the mere presence of a beautiful church building in the community constituted the extent of many suburbanites’ spiritual involvement: “They are glad to have a church in their vicinity to which they can send (not bring) their children, while they are satisfied that their church relationship should be close enough so that every few days they may walk contentedly past the church and say, ‘Isn’t that lovely church an asset in our community?’”¹⁰³ Devout commentators despaired of the superficial religiosity often found in suburbs like Edgewater.

Such negative appraisals made church life in the suburbs a subject of much anxiety and commentary among Protestant leaders at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Many attributed anemic church involvement to a lack of community life in suburbs. One suburban pastor lamented, “We lose sight of all community of interest. We look on the church simply as a place where we spend an hour or two together once a week. Returning home from it, we have, till another Sabbath, little concern or connection with one another.”¹⁰⁴ Dr. Amory H. Bradford, the minister of a

¹⁰² Isabelle Horton, *The Burden of the City* (New York/Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904), 85. See Chapter Four for a contextual look at the institutional church movement.

¹⁰³ William Bishop Gates, “What One Man Did for His Church and Community,” *Association Men* (Young Men’s Christian Associations), Vol. 39 Issue 7 (April 1914), 349.

¹⁰⁴ Giles Buckingham Willcox, *The Pastor Amidst His Flock* (New York: American Tract Society, 1890), 109.

large suburban church in New York, explained the causes of this tendency toward isolation: “elements [in suburban life] often defy organization. There is little cohesion among them. Of necessity, suburbanites emphasize individuality more than cooperation.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, he added, “those who dwell in the suburbs have divided interests. They live in one place and work in another. These divided interests tend to obscure, and often to destroy, municipal spirit.” As a result of all of these factors, he concluded, “[i]n the suburbs there is difficulty in promoting that personal acquaintance and mutual interest which are essential to the usefulness of the church and the welfare of the community.”¹⁰⁶

These clerical frustrations were often echoed by the Reverend J.M.D. Davidson, the pastor of the Church of the Atonement from its consecration as a full-fledged parish in 1898. By 1899, Atonement held four weekly services: the 11 am and 7:45 pm Sunday services, a 5 pm Wednesday evening service, and a 10 am Friday morning service, in addition to other opportunities for involvement like the Sunday School, the vestry and Finance Committee, St. Agnes Guild for women, and the choir for boys. However, these aspects of church life do not seem to have been as popular as corresponding offerings in Ravenswood two decades before. The rector regularly chastised his flock for not attending a weekly Thursday night lecture series and issued repeated encouragements to join in parish life beyond attending services: “There are many Church people at our services each Sunday who are comparatively new-comers to the parish, and who have not

¹⁰⁵ “Work of Suburban Churches: Some of the Factors and Problems of Church Work and Organization on the Outskirts of the Great Cities,” *Public Opinion* 33, no. 2 (1902), 55.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

yet identified themselves actively with the parish work and life.”¹⁰⁷ During Lent, Reverend Davidson admonished members about disappointing attendance at special services: “Thus far the attendance has been only fair.”¹⁰⁸ In 1899, the church bulletin, *The Clarion*, printed a piece on “Irregular Church-Going,” aimed at the “many people who class themselves as church-goers, who are yet very irregular in their attendance upon the stated services of the Church. They come once or twice a month on the average, or even oftener, but can never be counted upon, ordinarily, to be in their places Sunday after Sunday.”¹⁰⁹

Part of the difficulty in realizing regular attendance among all members lay in the fact that, due to the continuing construction of homes in Edgewater and the social mobility of its residents, parish membership turned over as steadily as it expanded. In the first twelve years of the Atonement’s existence, it counted 120 families as members, but only half of these families remained at the church in 1900. That year, forty families in the church membership had joined in the past three years. The bulletin conceded that parish growth was completely due to the growth of Edgewater’s population: “Our congregations are larger than ever. But they ought to be, when it is considered that the influx of residents has fully doubled our population of Edgewater and vicinity within the past three years.”¹¹⁰ A few years later, even as the bulletin touted the addition of twenty five families in six months, it acknowledged “with regret that we have lost quite a number of

¹⁰⁷ *The Clarion*, Feb. 1900, Vol. 1, No. 11, 5.

¹⁰⁸ *The Clarion*, March 1900, Vol. 1, No. 1, 3.

¹⁰⁹ *The Clarion*, Oct. 1899, Vol. 1, No. 7, 2.

¹¹⁰ *The Clarion*, Jan. 1901, Vol. 2, No. 11, 5.

our faithful standbys who have moved away from our parish” to Evanston and Oak Park.¹¹¹ The importance of welcoming strangers became a weekly refrain in the church bulletin; in 1899, Reverend Davidson admonished his flock sardonically: “It is not necessary to turn the church into a club house or a parish festival after each service, but the avoidance of that feature does not necessarily involve going to the other extreme of making the dispersion of a congregation a cross between a deaf mute exercise and a foot race. Dearly beloved brethren, there is such a thing as a golden mean. Let us try it.”¹¹²

Responding to Growth: The Parish House

Despite the frustrations due to turnover in membership, the consistent popularity and expansion of Edgewater guaranteed the Church of the Atonement a steadily increasing number of members at least nominally connected to the parish. The growing membership pushed some leaders in the church to contemplate expansion of the church plant. Such expansion was not out of the ordinary for churches of the same size and placement; by the end of the nineteenth century, many Protestants had come to see the church work conducted outside of worship services, particularly the Sunday School, as requiring a separate building. Henry Barnard, who traced the evolution of church structures in the United States through the nineteenth century, reported that

Sunday School and Bible Classes have come to be such important agencies in religious progress, that special accommodations are required and provided for them...And so strong are the demands for social life in connection with the church, that most of the newer church edifices have their parlors, retiring rooms,

¹¹¹ *The Clarion*, Sept. 1904, Vol. 6, No. 9, 2-3.

¹¹² *The Clarion*, Nov. 1899, Vol. 8, No. 1, 4.

ante-rooms, committee rooms, and many of them pastor's studies and church libraries in connection with the church edifices.¹¹³

By the end of the 1890's, regular parish activities at Church of the Atonement included Sunday School, bible classes, a Sunday School library, multiple Guild meetings, parish receptions, children's entertainments, lectures, meetings of the vestry, industrial school, and regular choir rehearsals. Against the objections of more cautious members of the congregation, Reverend Davidson argued that a parish house was needed to "provide a home and headquarters for the parish activities, which cannot properly or conveniently be carried on in the main body of the church."¹¹⁴

The planning for a parish house commenced in 1899 and continued despite the fact that insurance bills and other expenses, in addition to the cost of necessary improvements to the church basement, threatened to put the church in debt. The vestry made arrangements to purchase the lot south of the church for \$3,250 and the Sunday School put forth \$1,000 toward the building fund. Even before the parish house was completed, talk of expanding and improving the sanctuary itself commenced. Plans included extending the church east to the alley that abutted it and adding north and south transepts. These speculative additions would cost the church an additional \$10,000 to \$12,000. An editorial in *The Clarion* supported the plans for expansion: "This is a crucial time in our parish affairs and a wise and generous policy is demanded by the exigencies of the situation. The future growth of the church is assured if we can but secure the

¹¹³ Henry Barnard, "Church Architecture Past and Present in the United States," *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 32 (1882), 1072.

¹¹⁴ *The Clarion*, Oct. 1899, Vol. 1, No. 7, 5.

equipments that are imperatively needed.”¹¹⁵ Such a position was by no means universal among members of the congregation, and many parish publications make reference to the controversy engendered by the ambitious building plans.

The parish house, two-story sandstone and stucco structure, was completed in 1901 and cost \$12,000. The building contained a chapel, library, Sunday School rooms, and meeting rooms, with a gymnasium in the basement.¹¹⁶ Even after the completion of this building, Davidson was still exhorting members of the church to make the investment worthwhile: “Our parish house is here. It is completed, but our work is just begun. Good people, let us use it! Workers in every department of parochial activity are needed....New organizations but wait the right persons to organize and conduct them.”¹¹⁷ The costs of the parish house would burden the church with crippling debts for the next decade, but trustees of the church moved on the plans to expand the sanctuary almost immediately.

Supporters of physical expansion argued that the fifteen-year-old English parish church was no longer adequate to serve the growing suburban community: “What was then designed as a little suburban church—still one of the most artistic in the diocese, is each year facing the encroachment of the rapidly growing city with the prospect of being soon too small for actual needs.”¹¹⁸ Reverend Davidson retained a positive attitude, telling his flock in 1905, “[i]t is gratifying indeed that even they who differed in opinions have practically come to agree that the chief duty of the hour is to take a forward and not

¹¹⁵ *The Clarion*, June 1900, Vol. 2, No. 3, 3.

¹¹⁶ “Twenty-One New Churches in Chicago,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 21, 1901, 62.

¹¹⁷ *The Clarion*, November 1901, Vol. 3, No. 8, 4.

¹¹⁸ *The Clarion*, June 1905, “Anniversary Number,” 5.

a backward look, expecting every man to do his duty.”¹¹⁹ Such a forward-looking perspective was demanded of recalcitrant members; according to Episcopal canon law, any church carrying a mortgage could not be consecrated, so the physical improvements meant to enhance the social life of the parish would keep the sacred structure unconsecrated well into the twentieth century.

Buena Park and Sheridan Park

Complicating the continuously altering social and physical landscape in Edgewater was the steady organization of new churches, not only in Edgewater itself but also in Ravenswood and in the newer nearby residential subdivisions of Buena Park and Sheridan Park. Where Ravenswood’s early settlers had agreed to create a “union” church in Ravenswood Congregational, the establishment of a high church Episcopalian congregation did not allow for a single church to accommodate either the religious or the population needs of the constantly growing suburb. Instead, the suburban landscape became increasingly dense with churches for mainline Protestants across the denominational spectrum.¹²⁰

The Buena Park and Sheridan Park subdivisions emerged around the same time as Edgewater, and though neither was marked with the same all-consuming eye for detail that characterized Cochran’s development, both attracted the same wealthy clientele. Buena Park roughly followed the boundaries of the old Waller farm, which had been

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Two Catholic churches joined the growing number of Protestant churches: St. Ita in Edgewater, as previously mentioned, in 1900, and St. Mary of the Lake in Buena Park in 1901.

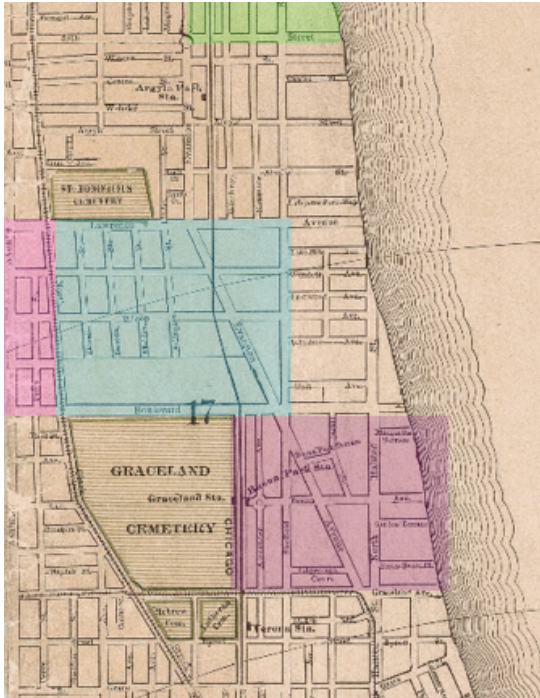


Figure 24. Buena Park and Sheridan Park. Both of these suburbs were located on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad and bordered Graceland Cemetery. Buena Park (purple) began being developed around the same time as Edgewater to the north. Sheridan Park (blue), which neighbored Ravenswood, was not developed until around 1890. Buena Park in purple. Detail of Rand McNally and Co.'s standard map of Chicago, 1892. University of Chicago Library.

situated on the lake since the late 1850's.¹²¹ James B. Waller began subdividing his land in 1885, the year after the Chicago and Evanston railway went through, and the whole parcel was annexed to the city of Chicago in 1889 with the rest of Lake View. Buena Park's position five miles north of the loop, with streetcar access and an 18-minute train ride from Union Depot, assured the swift growth of the subdivision. Advertised as "A First-Class Suburb for First-Class People" with "[h]ouses of a certain cost required, varying with the locality," Buena Park grew into a wealthy enclave of lavish architect-

¹²¹ Kentucky native James B. Waller came to Chicago in 1858 and, seeing potential in the expansive reaches along the lake far north of Chicago, he bought property there. He built a brick Italianate house near the lake in 1860, called it "Buena," and raised nine children there. A year later, Graceland Cemetery opened a stone's throw from Buena. Waller's Buena was the destination for many Chicagoans on pleasure trips in the 1860's. Levi Leiter later recalled his weekend excursions with friend and partner Marshall Field, saying of Buena, "It has been the scene of more entertaining than any other house in Chicago, according to some of the old residents who went there in the 60's." Many Chicagoans got their first view of the far north side when Waller hosted refugees from the Chicago Fire in 1871. After the United States Marine Hospital for retired and sick sailors opened along the lake in 1873, its gardens became another tourist destination. "Old Homestead Being Razed," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 16, 1913, 5.

designed single family homes, with a few luxury apartment buildings that did nothing to detract from the overall suburban character of the subdivision.¹²² Like Edgewater, the suburb was situated on the lakeshore with macadamized streets, sewer, water, gas, stone sidewalks, and large elm trees. Soon, it caught up to Edgewater in reputation as well: “By the turn of the century Buena Park was well on its way to becoming the North Side’s most fashionable residential district.”¹²³

Sheridan Park developed a few years after Edgewater and Buena Park, its borders extending from Irving Park Road to Montrose Avenue and from Clark Street to Evanston Avenue. Sheridan Park emerged when the city of Chicago refused to allow Graceland Cemetery to expand north of Montrose Avenue; left with ninety acres of open land, the cemetery corporation decided to subdivide the entire area.¹²⁴ The development acquired its name from the nearby railroad station on the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul line that passed through Edgewater further north. In contrast to Edgewater and Buena Park, Sheridan Park gained “city improvements” only slowly; gas did not arrive until 1893, and many of the district’s streets were not paved until 1900. The curved streets of Sheridan Park distinguished it from the monotony of the Chicago grid and “wherever you looked there was [sic] landscaped gardens.”¹²⁵ A woman who grew up in Sheridan Park

¹²² Display Ad, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1888, p. 1; Dominic Pacyga and Ellen Skerrett, *Chicago: City of Neighborhoods* (Chicago: Loyola University Chicago, 1986), 106. Early apartment buildings such as the Pattington (1902) featured nine room apartments for small families with servants.

¹²³ Pacyga and Skerrett, 106. The west part of Buena Park, near the train, was not as fine: “The Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway was on the ground at that time and there were nineteen or twenty trains each way a day—besides freight. Consequently, there was a great deal of smoke, noise and dirt.” Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 37, 1.

¹²⁴ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 37, 2.

¹²⁵ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 44, 1.

described the “winding unpaved streets, almost like country lanes except that one realized that they were left unpaved from an aesthetic viewpoint only. Green trees arched over the street; there were many homes of well-off and wealthy people; there was quiet and charm and culture.”¹²⁶ As in Edgewater, “[t]he people who bought homes in this district...did not work in the district. Most of them worked in the Loop and used the CM&StP Railroad to commute to the city.”¹²⁷ Sheridan Park eventually attracted some of Chicago’s most powerful men and their families, including John P. Altgeld, the former Governor of Illinois, and Edward F. Dunne, Mayor of Chicago from 1903 to 1907.¹²⁸

Unlike Ravenswood and Edgewater, where the organization and even construction of churches preceded much of the residential development, Buena Park and Sheridan Park remained firmly residential for several years. Part of this delay may be attributed to the more laissez faire attitudes of Waller and the Graceland Cemetery company regarding the overall development of the districts. A former resident later recalled, “Buena Park never was a community in the sense that a suburb of Chicago is a community. It was a small area settled mostly by people from Chicago who wanted to have real homes.” She went on to explain, “[n]o Woman’s Clubs have grown up in the district, perhaps because Ravenswood was such a thriving community with the aspects of a suburb and their Woman’s Club together with that of Lakeview absorbed the women of Buena Park.”¹²⁹ It seems that these two conditions—the strength of social institutions in

¹²⁶ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 54, 3.

¹²⁷ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 44, 2.

¹²⁸ Altgeld lived on Dover north of Wilson, while Dunne lived at the corner of Beacon and Sunnyside.

¹²⁹ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 36, 1.

neighboring communities and the lack of community spirit in both Buena Park and Sheridan Park—retarded the development of indigenous religious institutions. A low residential density also created less need for a large church or churches.

This is not to say that the neighborhood lacked the traditional Protestant values we have seen in Ravenswood and Edgewater. In 1894, Buena Park was the first community in Chicago to take advantage of the creation of a local option prohibition district in an effort to prevent the proliferation of saloons and other amusements that occurred in Hyde Park after the Columbian Exposition.¹³⁰ With the extension of the elevated train to Wilson Avenue in 1900, church organization finally began in earnest in both Sheridan Park and Buena Park.

When churches did emerge in Buena Park and Sheridan Park after 1900, they initially competed for limited available meeting space in suburbs with a dearth of civil and commercial buildings. In 1900, the widow of James Waller, Lucy Waller, having inherited \$200,000 upon the death of her husband in 1887, bequeathed the funds to build a Presbyterian church in his memory, subject to the condition “that the Bible shall always be taught from its pulpit in its entirety as the very word of God.”¹³¹ Mrs. Waller also bequeathed plot of land at Sheridan Road and Evanston Avenue, with “[n]ovel provisions for the permanent consecration of the property to strictly orthodox religious purposes.”¹³²

¹³⁰ After Buena Park succeeded in creating a prohibition district that encompassed much of the land along the lake, saloons located on its outskirts: “No saloons were allowed east of Clark Street north of Irving Park Boulevard and south of Lawrence Avenue. So right on the northeast corner of Broadway and north of Lawrence Avenue developed saloons.” Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 53, 1. The churches of Sheridan Park and Buena Park would come into direct conflict with these saloons by 1910, a clash detailed in Chapter Three.

¹³¹ “Admission of the Will of the Late James B. Waller to Probate,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 17 1887, p. 8; Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 39, 1.

¹³² “Bible Governs Land Title,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 21, 1906, 11.

The distinctively shaped lot was an oblong triangle with frontage of 109 feet and a depth of 342 feet. Even supporters of the Buena Memorial Presbyterian Church evinced little enthusiasm for the chosen site at first, objecting to the shape of the lot, the frequent noise of the streetcars that as of 1900 rumbled up both Sheridan and Evanston, and the occasional noise of automobile traffic. Moreover, recalled one member, “[t]here were some in the community who were not so enthusiastic over the project of the invasion of a new church in the field.”¹³³ Only eleven people comprised the original membership of Buena Memorial.

Before a building could be constructed, the first members scrambled for a place to hold services. Only one storeroom, on Evanston Avenue, was available, but another new church, North Shore Congregational—also established in 1900—had already begun holding services there. In the winter of 1900, one of the church’s founders, Professor Samuel Ives Curtiss of the Chicago Theological Seminary, contacted a forty-three year old minister in Indiana, the Reverend James Ainslie, about coming to Chicago to start a church, assuring Ainslie that “the field was one of unusual promise.”¹³⁴ Ainslie agreed to come to Sheridan Park to pastor the seventy-five members desiring Congregational services. Curtiss’ guarantee was good: by the end of its first year, the membership of

¹³³ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 39, 3. Such concerns about overcrowding the field with churches were not unique at this time. When a group of Presbyterians looked to establish a church in Ravenswood in 1902, according to Frank L. Stevenson “[t]here was some reluctance on the part of the Presbytery’s committee to authorize a church in Ravenswood, owing to some understanding with then existing churches of Ravenswood.” However, he continues, “there were some determined Presbyterians in the Hermitage-Montrose locality of Ravenswood, and they were not to be put off.... This early group insisted on official recognition.” Frank L. Stevenson, *Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Chicago, 1902-1937: A Story of the Church* (Chicago: Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Historical Committee, 1939), 6.

¹³⁴ “Address by Reverend J.S. Ainslie,” *Chicago Seminary Quarterly* (Chicago: Board of Directors and the Faculty of the Chicago Theological Seminary, 1904), 22; Albert Nelson Marquis, *The Book of Chicagoans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: A.N. Marquis, 1911), 8.

North Shore Congregational had reached 165, and by 1903 the church raised funds to construct a small stone building at the corner of Wilson and Sheridan.

As soon as North Shore Congregational moved out of the Evanston Avenue storeroom into its new church, the congregation of St. Simon's Episcopal mission moved in. St. Simon's started in 1902 as a mission from St. Peter's Episcopal church at Evanston and Belmont in Lake View. The small mission held its first services in the empty Sheridan Park station of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad. An observer at the time noted that "[t]he big stone pile, with its spreading shelters, looks little like a church, except for the tall stone tower, which might be considered a spire."¹³⁵ The thirty initial members of St. Simon's carpeted a platform and installed a pulpit and other "ecclesiastical paraphernalia." In 1904, after a year of worship in the storeroom, St. Simon's purchased property at Leland and Racine and built a small cruciform stone church, costing a little over \$14,000, where services were first held on New Year's Day 1905.



Figure 25. The Sheridan Park depot. As one of the only public spaces in Sheridan Park or Buena Park, it gave young congregations a place to meet until they could find better accommodations. Its use attests to the important role of transportation in the life of these early suburbs. Collection of John Chuckman.

¹³⁵ "New Parish Begins its Career with a Depot for a Church," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sept. 15, 1902, 3.

In a game of ecclesiastical musical chairs, Buena Memorial Presbyterian moved into the Sheridan Park station when St. Simon's vacated it to move into the Evanston Avenue storeroom in 1903. Only after securing the station for services did Buena's members worry about recruiting a larger congregation: "They used the polling lists, and sent cards to each one. Also they distributed bills through every mail box." This strategy proved surprisingly successful; on the first Sunday morning of worship, "eighty-two people came in response to cards and bills."¹³⁶ Despite the unexpected success of their canvassing for members, holding services in the station was problematic:

The St. Paul Road ran few Sunday trains, but one south-bound was scheduled out of Sheridan Park (Wilson Avenue) at 11:57 A.M. The schedule was slow north of there and frequently the crew would come down from Evanston ahead of time and pull in about 11:50, and while climbing out of the cab, the fireman would forget to release the automatic bell ringer, and almost every Sunday the minister would have that bell ringing loudly for five or six minutes, until he would give up in despair, conclude his sermon and call for the last hymn.¹³⁷

Not until 1905 did Buena Memorial's minister and congregation escape the travails of the Sheridan Park depot, when the trustees of Mrs. Waller's estate finally erected a small chapel on the oddly-shaped lot that she had bequeathed. That January, sixty-five people enrolled as charter members. Half of them presented letters from other nearby churches: twenty-one from Lake View Presbyterian, seven from Ravenswood Presbyterian, and five from Second Presbyterian in Evanston—a distribution that gives some sense of where Buena Park's residents had been hitherto fore been attending worship services.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 39, 3.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

These Protestant churches in Buena Park and Sheridan Park were joined by smaller churches, Sheridan Road Methodist Episcopal and North Shore Baptist, which was organized after a local mail carrier noticed that many of the homes on his north side route received Baptist literature.¹³⁹ The wide denominational choice did little to influence place identity, however, for social patterns in Buena Park and Sheridan Park created an even more fragmented community than in Edgewater. One analyst later remarked that “although this group may be in close contact physically it has not formed any sort of social contact at all. The greater number of families...seek their amusement and entertainment at various widely separated and different places. Although many of the families are members of golf or country clubs, I do not think there are two families on the street that are members of the same one.”¹⁴⁰ Churches established a moral presence on the landscape, but did not unite the populations of these suburbs behind a single ideal.

By 1907, an editorial in the Church of the Atonement’s *Clarion* commented on the rising number of churches in the area:

From a Church standpoint, the facilities of Christian worship have developed in this section of Chicago quite as rapidly, or perhaps more so, than the material growth which has been so marked. Within the section which, four or five years ago, formed the natural limits of our own parish, there have been organized no less than seven or eight religious bodies....No less than six new church edifices have been built in that time, and others are contemplated, several at present having but temporary places of meeting, and all are reported as having growing congregations and Sunday schools.¹⁴¹

Such a situation affected the growth of Church of the Atonement, the writer observed, because new organizations attracted both members who were attached to different

¹³⁹ Catholics founded Our Lady of the Lake parish in Buena Park in 1901.

¹⁴⁰ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 55, 2.

¹⁴¹ *The Clarion*, July/August 1907, Vol. 9, No. 8, 2-3.

denominations and residents searching simply for a nearby church of any mainstream Protestant affiliation. Therefore, “it is quite natural that our Sunday school must be content with less rapid growth than if the whole population were not so divided in its religious allegiance. Certainly to most of these new organizations, and probably to all, we have lost quite a number of children from time to time.”¹⁴² After going into debt to build a new parish house, the Church of the Atonement found itself competing against a growing market of religious institutions to attract a congregation to make use of it.

Still, persistent population growth in all the north shore suburbs allowed for expansion in congregations of every stripe, particularly after the further extension of the elevated from Wilson Avenue to the Village of Evanston in 1908. Between 1904 and 1908, the membership of Church of the Atonement grew from 500 to 935 and church leadership prepared the congregation for even more dramatic growth: “At the present time, with increased facilities for transportation and the proverbial attractiveness of Edgewater as one of the most desirable residence parts of this huge Metropolis—it needs no prophet to predict that very soon we shall have rather a dense population at our very doors.”¹⁴³ In two decades, the little lakeside parish for Edgewater’s elite had transformed into one growing church among many in a swiftly urbanizing suburb.

Conclusion

For a while, the mass migration of middle and upper class Chicagoans to the suburban outskirts of the city may have calmed fears about urban change and diversity,

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ *The Clarion*, June 1908, Vol. 10, No. 7, 7.

but these realities remained omnipresent threats to suburban life. As annexation transformed early suburbs into fringes of the city and streetcars and railroads pushed further and further out, the nature of these idyllic upper-middle class communities changed. They became more and more like cities, the very places their residents had so recently attempted to leave behind. By 1908, two decades after Edgewater began, the suburban way of life that attracted many of its residents was already coming to an end. One resident recalled that Evanston Avenue

used to be a wide street, paved with cobbles, on which private homes faced, and along which on Sunday afternoons carriages and buggies took advantage of the half-hour it saved one in the trip to the loop. But as soon as the street car tracks were laid on Broadway [Evanston] these homes were torn down to make room for the stores and commercial establishments that were to take their places, and from then on the change was complete.¹⁴⁴

Many residents moved even further north, to suburbs like Lake Forest and Winnetka. Those who stayed began to fight back against the urbanizing forces.

The creation of churches made the suburbs a more cosmopolitan, desirable place to live, permitting residents to include church membership in the list of factors that shaped their personal identities. But the proliferation of other, competing social institutions prevented Edgewater, Sheridan Park, and Buena Park from forming place identities around Christian domesticity, as had occurred in Ravenswood. Along the lake, churches were simply a part of the menu of amenities that created the good life, the ordered life. Buildings like those erected by the Church of the Atonement fit into Edgewater's suburban brand and reinforced its marketability and desirability, but economic homogeneity and hierarchical club memberships were more important than

¹⁴⁴ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 55, 1.

churches as tools for social networking in suburbs like Edgewater. This social reality affected the development of a robust church presence in community identity in the 1890's, and it would negatively impact these churches' abilities to stave off the commercial development that transformed the landscape in the nineteen-teens.

CHAPTER THREE:
“IN THE INTERESTS OF OURSELVES AND THE COMMUNITY” –
CHURCH ACTIVISM AND SPATIAL CONTROL

On the morning of January 12, 1906, Mrs. Bessie Hollister, a young wife and popular member of the choir at Wesley Methodist Church in Lake View, set out from her home on Fullerton Avenue to do a few errands. She stopped at the florist and the grocer and left a clock at the jeweler's for repairs. Then, she disappeared. Shortly after dawn the next day, her lifeless body was discovered in a shed near Lincoln Avenue, lying facedown in a pile of refuse and manure. The bruised face and torn, disheveled clothing of the victim spoke of a vicious struggle with her attacker; further examination revealed that Mrs. Hollister had been strangled with a thin piece of copper wire.¹ Overnight, the city seethed with outrage at the brutality of the crime, which occurred as part of an unprecedented epidemic of murder and assault across Chicago. A speaker at a mass meeting at Buena Park's North Shore Congregational Church lamented, "The city of '93,

¹ "Chicago As Seen By Herself," *McClure's Magazine*, May 1907, 67. Within hours, Richard Ivens, the mentally deficient young man who found Hollister's body, confessed to the crime. Newspapers and magazines across the country followed the Hollister case in minute detail, and it was not lacking in drama: Mrs. Hollister's brother-in-law attempted to shoot Ivens at his arraignment. In view of Ivens' diminished mental capacity, the judge and prosecutor recommended a life sentence, but the pressure of public opinion was such that the jury returned the death penalty and Ivens was hanged on June 22, 1906. Many observers later claimed that Ivens confessed under the duress of beatings or "hypnotic suggestion"; even the famous psychologist William James weighed in, agreeing that Ivens was "probably 'hypnotized' by the police treatment" and calling him "a victim of popular ignorance of morbid psychology." William James, Letter to Dr. J.S. Christison, August 3, 1906, in William James, Frederick Burkhardt, *Essays, Comments, and Reviews* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 186.

the White City, the city of your pride, has disappeared and in its place has arisen a black city of lawlessness and crime, the city of our shame.”²



Figure 26. Bessie Hollister.
Chicago Daily Tribune.

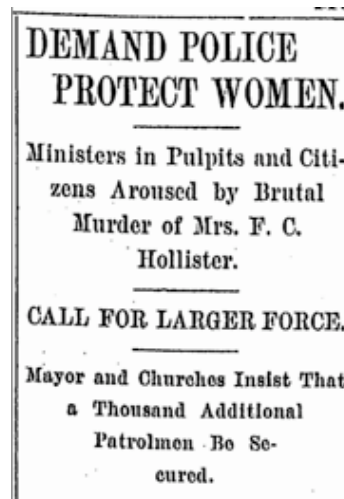


Figure 27. Headline, January 15, 1906. *Chicago Daily Tribune.*

For Chicagoans in the relatively peaceful residential neighborhoods on the fringes of the city, the murder precipitated the specter of chaos, an attack on everything held dear: “Every husband...perceived that the fate which fell upon this hapless woman could have fallen upon his wife; every father shuddered with the comprehension that his daughter might easily have been assailed.”³ Residents of the north side saw the Hollister murder as symptomatic of larger moral problems in Chicago: “The scourge of crime in Chicago would suggest a low state of morals...Brutality and lust seem rampant.”⁴ As churches across Chicago organized mass meetings and prayer vigils “to ask divine

² “Anti-Crime Wave Reaching Climax,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1906, 1

³ Quoted in Tal Golan, *Laws of Men and Laws of Nature: The History of Scientific Expert Testimony in England and America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 216.

⁴ *The Ravenswood Citizen*, January 20, 1906.

assistance...to clear the moral atmosphere of the city,”⁵ the *Ravenswood Citizen* editorialized: “This city needs a revival of personal, as well as, of public piety, purity, reverence, honesty and righteousness. Gambling wherever carried on, vile resorts, dance houses, degrading clubs, and all things that tend to vileness and the keeping of minds and imaginations inflamed with thoughts of crime and lust should be abolished.”⁶ Crime and lust, according to this mindset, emerged from spaces in the urban landscape that both allowed and encouraged dissolution and immorality, and only a complete purging of such spaces would create the purified, morally homogeneous city that church-goers across Chicago hoped for.

In the decade after 1906, when the expansion of mass transportation initiated a dramatic transformation of Chicago’s north shore from quiet residential neighborhoods into a bustling commercial district, churches in Buena Park, Sheridan Park, and Ravenswood were central players in efforts to shape the meanings and uses of space according to the values of evangelical Protestantism. Citizens turned to local ministers for public leadership in neighborhood crusades against crime and the incursion of commercial amusements. Church auditoriums and YMCAs served as the sites of mass meetings and planning sessions. These church-backed citizen movements not only illustrate the central place that churches still occupied in public life, they also illuminate attitudes that church-going people of the north shore held about gender and sexuality, class, and the state of the modern city.

⁵ “Put New Energy Into Crime War,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23, 1906, 1

⁶ *The Ravenswood Citizen*, January 20, 1906.

The preponderance of the community activism of north shore churches—here, the institutional bases of middle- and upper-class social conservatism—embraced a coercive, moralistic approach concentrating on the eradication of dissolute elements from the urban landscape. Paul Boyer argues that the dawn of the twentieth century saw the “secularization of the urban moral-control movement,” with the emotional appeals of the preacher giving way to the rationality of the social scientist.⁷ This chapter makes the case that churches actually continued to play a role in moral control through their efforts to regulate the use of urban space.

Church activists employed a neighborhood maintenance approach to community organizing, framing their opposition to the incursion of unwelcome spaces on the landscape in terms of maintaining property values and neighborhood homogeneity and using “a variety of tactics, including consensus, peer pressure, political lobbying, and legislation” to achieve their ends.⁸ In their efforts to impose Protestant values by force of law, church representatives lobbied Chicago’s city government to regulate the use of space through police surveillance and by revoking entertainment licenses and enforcing Sunday closing laws. Suspicious of the power of a corrupt urban political machine, these Protestant elites also took matters into their own hands, hiring private police forces, forming vigilance committees, and organizing protective associations. Church women, whose private activities sustained Protestant churches, entered into these public debates as well, under the cover of protecting the moral purity of the home and the residential

⁷ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 205. On moral coercion, see 176-179.

⁸ Patrica Mooney-Melvin, *The Organic City: Urban Definition and Community Organization, 1880-1920* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 4.

district. By mobilizing residents around shared understandings of place, church activists achieved some immediate successes in shaping the moral landscape to conform to their vision. Over time, however, the tide of secular culture and physical change proved overwhelming, forcing churches to consider new ways to influence the city around them.

The Decline of the Protestant Ethos in American Culture

The tensions that emerged in Sheridan Park, Buena Park, and Ravenswood and, to a lesser degree, Edgewater during this period of community transformation reflect a much larger assault on the supremacy of middle-class, evangelical Protestant values in the broader sweep of American culture. Through the end of the nineteenth century, Protestant values were a central pillar of a “genteel middle-class cultural hegemony” in the United States.⁹ Warren Susman labels this hegemony a “culture of character,” which emphasized self-control and such values such as morals, duty, work, honor, reputation, integrity, manners, and citizenship.¹⁰ Shaped by this cultural hegemony, most Protestant, American-born residents of suburban residential districts shared the implicit assumption that their neighbors upheld it, if not for religious reasons then as a matter of class.

The Protestant cultural hegemony exhibited a longstanding impulse to subject cities to a greater degree of social control, an impulse that often expressed itself in efforts to govern the use of space.¹¹ Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth,

⁹ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 137.

¹⁰ Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 273-274.

¹¹ Boyer, 205.

evangelical Protestant activists rallied to abolish the saloon and the brothel, the preeminent geographical symbols of urban vice.¹² The impulse toward social and spatial control also made elite Protestants among the most vocal supporters of the suburban movement, which allowed for an idealized moral geography that revolved around home and church, “a domestic ideal...[that posed] as a bulwark against the assaults of public culture.”¹³ In Ravenswood, geographical proximity and the consistent overlap of residents’ paths ensured “the moral oversight of every person in the town,” while the creation of a prohibition district defended against the contaminating influence of saloons.¹⁴ Even in Edgewater, Buena Park, and Sheridan Park, where churches were less central to residents’ lives, place identity rested on the foundation of the suburban ideal. In all of these communities, a domestic ideology couched in the values of evangelical Protestantism relied on the maintenance of a clear social and moral order.

Over time, however, the escalating complexity of the modern city and the ever-widening reach of transportation networks meant that a tidy division of geography into moral and immoral zones would no longer be possible. After 1900, commercial expansion pushed outward toward the city’s peripheral neighborhoods, slowly urbanizing what had formerly been quiet residential districts. In the polyglot density of the early twentieth century city, a high degree of social control and moral surveillance simply

¹² See Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 204-229, and Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). John Michael Giggie and Diane H. Winston note that “vice” is simply “a subjective designation for commercial culture.” In *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 2.

¹³ Thekla Ellen Joiner, *Sin in the City: Chicago and Revivalism, 1880-1920* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 236.

¹⁴ Edward Everett Hale, “Destitution in Boston: A Symposium,” *Arena*, 2 (Nov. 1890): 741.

could not be sustained. Jane Addams noted sadly that “[t]he social relationships in a modern city are so hastily made and often so superficial that the old human restraints of public opinion, long sustained in smaller communities, have...broken down.”¹⁵ This loosening of traditional social restraints, along with the introduction of mass media and mass culture, ushered in an ethic that Susman calls a “culture of personality.”¹⁶ For a new generation of Americans—often the children of immigrants or the native children of rural America—the excitement and possibility of the modern city beckoned and ideals of self-control and social control gave way to the pursuit of leisure, personal enjoyment, and unfettered consumption.

These cultural changes flummoxed Protestant elites. Those who belonged to long-established Protestant churches—Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist Episcopal—and descended from families with deep roots in the United States struggled to determine how to relate to an American society that seemed increasingly out of their control.¹⁷ The new culture of personality owed much to the rhythms and customs of working class life and it promised women at least temporary liberation from the constraints of domesticity, thus upending traditional Protestant ways of thinking about class and gender. For old guard Protestants, therefore, the question of whether they could continue to dominate American culture depended on reclaiming control over issues of sexuality, class, and politics.

¹⁵ Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), 104.

¹⁶ Susman, 276-77.

¹⁷ George M. Marsden, *Religion and American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1990), 168.

Of particular import during this period were the attitudes of evangelical Protestants toward the city. For many religious people, “the twentieth century’s ‘new’ American city was seen to be a place of great peril, filled with immorality and sin, a place to be confronted and conquered.”¹⁸ This vision of the city was certainly not new, as Protestant activists had spent much of the nineteenth century combating the urban menace. But, as Paul Boyer explains,

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, urban moral-control volunteers had felt sufficiently confident of their standing, or optimistic enough about their prospects, to adopt...an ‘assimilative’ approach: treating those who violated the prevailing norms as misguided wanderers who by persuasion could be brought back to the fold...[Now] the focus shifted from reclaiming individual transgressors to proving that the reformers were still capable of asserting a jeopardized moral dominance.¹⁹

Protestants turned more and more to a “rigid social-control stance adopted by the individual who has begun to realize that ‘his norms may not be as respected as he has thought’; the person who is becoming ‘alien to his own society.’”²⁰ As a result, religious activists began to build consensus by fostering a siege mentality. This sense of embattlement on all sides had real resonance in spatial politics. As geographer Peter Jackson has argued, “[t]he transgression of social boundaries [was] represented as a transgression of spatial boundaries, cast in a language of moral outrage where the social world of debauchery, sin, and ribaldry [was] transposed spatially into the world of streets, parks, and pavements.”²¹ In Protestant rhetoric about the moral geography of the city,

¹⁸ Joiner, 233.

¹⁹ Boyer, 216.

²⁰ Ibid. See Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 69-87; quoted phrases from 87.

²¹ Peter Jackson, *Maps of Meaning: An Introduction to Cultural Geography* (City: Routledge,

tropes of “invasion” of a sacred, domestic center by immoral places and immoral people are common.

Stephen Warner has observed that “Americans are inclined to use their religious institutions to build community in the face of social change.”²² Sharing the views of many Progressive reformers that health and virtue depended on the influences of the physical and moral environment, church-goers in Sheridan Park, Buena Park, and Ravenswood understood the direct connection between spatial transformation and social change. By framing their arguments against social change in terms of the defense of a purified moral geography, these Protestant activists elevated anxieties about modern culture to a righteous stand against an impending moral contagion of the community.

The Specter of Crime: A Shift in Moral Geography

The first invasion of the moral geography of the north shore neighborhoods came in the guise of the 1905-1906 crime wave, which made itself felt across the city. Before the turn of the century, geographical and class separation allowed residents of the new developments of Buena Park and Sheridan Park to view their communities as removed from and untouched by the immorality of the vice-ridden city. The high price of residential lots created a homogeneous enclave of upper class residents in single family homes, and vice—embodied by the dual boogeyman of the saloon and the brothel—was segregated into districts closer to lower-class areas in the center of the city. These

1994), 165.

²² R. Stephen Warner, “Building Religious Communities at the Turn of the Century,” in Lowell Livezey, *Public Religion and Urban Transformation: Faith in the City* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 298.

realities of a socially and morally segmented urban geography, made possible by easy commuter train access to downtown, allowed for a complacent confidence in the insulation of the residential district from the immorality of the city.

Reverend James Ainslie of North Shore Congregational later reminisced fondly about his initial impressions of Sheridan Park: “When I first came to Wilson Avenue [in 1900] it was a lovely district, all residence district with lovely homes.”²³ This idyll of insulation from the city’s ills began to come to an end later that year when the Northwestern Elevated Rail Road extended its track to Sheridan Park, with all northbound trains now ending at the Wilson Avenue terminus. “What the middle- and upper-classes failed to realize and learned very painfully,” Perry Duis observes, “was the ironic way in which transportation both made moral insulation possible and at the same time insured its eventual failure.”²⁴ The creation of streetcar lines along Evanston²⁵ and



Figure 28. The primary north shore train lines after 1907. The Ravenswood line is at left, the line to Evanston is at right. Rand McNally Chicago street map, 1910. University of Chicago Library.

²³ Vivien Palmer Documents, Uptown, Vol. I, document 52, 1-2.

²⁴ Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 205.

²⁵ Evanston became Broadway Avenue in 1914.

Sheridan Avenues and the further extension of the train tracks northward to the city of Evanston in 1908 spurred the first stirrings of concentrated commercial development in the north shore neighborhoods. The expanded train network also effectively erased geographical distances that had allowed prosperous residents of Chicago to segregate themselves from the social and cultural influences of the rest of the city.

In 1905 and 1906, a series of hold-ups perpetrated against members of North Shore Congregational and Buena Memorial Presbyterian churches made citizens of the Sheridan Park and Buena Park neighborhoods eminently aware of this fact.²⁶ Then, soon after the murder of Bessie Hollister, a similar attack struck closer to home. Mrs. Josephine Loomis, an active member of St. Simon's Episcopal in Sheridan Park, was robbed and choked to near unconsciousness a half-block from her home, steps away from the Buena Park elevated station.²⁷ Already aroused by the furor that emerged across the city in the days after Hollister's murder, the clerical leaders of Buena Park and Sheridan Park sprang into action. Reverend Herbert Gwyn, Mrs. Loomis' pastor at St. Simon's, met with the ministers of North Shore Congregational, Buena Memorial, and North Shore Baptist to organize a "crusade against crime" in the community. The ministers planned a mass meeting at North Shore Congregational with the intention of pressuring city authorities to act against vice and disorder in their communities.

The meeting at North Shore Congregational was one of many taking place in churches across Chicago in the wake of the Hollister murder, as part of "a movement for

²⁶ "Put New Energy Into Crime War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23, 1906, 1.

²⁷ "Chokes a Woman; Takes Her Rings," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 21, 1906, 1.



Figure 29. North Shore Congregational Church, at the corner of Wilson Avenue and Sheridan Road. Its central position put the church at the center of neighborhood activism. Chicago History in Postcards.

the union of all churches and civic leagues in an organization to rid the city of crime.”²⁸ Speakers at the North Shore meeting targeted their wrath at saloons, dance halls, and other havens of vice that incubated criminal lust and at powerful figures that allowed these spaces to operate without regulation. Reverend J.N. Hall, who had been Bessie Hollister’s pastor at Wesley Methodist, told attendees at the North Shore Congregational meeting, “I myself was one of the committee which went to the mayor to ask him to close the saloons on Sunday. The appeal resulted in nothing. Just a month from that day the mutilated body of Mrs. Hollister was found not 200 feet from my church in the early dawn.”²⁹ Another speaker at the meeting, Judge N.C. Sears, blamed local businessmen who put profit before their moral responsibility to purify the city: “It is the business men who prefer...a wide open town, to what they would call a Sunday school administration.” These men allowed the city to wallow in vice but now, the judge thundered, such delinquency came back to haunt them: “They knew a wide open town breeds vice, but...they never thought that some day vice would be knocking with its own fists on the

²⁸ “Anti-Crime War Stirs Churches,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 25, 1906, 2.

²⁹ “Anti-Crime Wave Reaching Climax,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1906, 1.

doors of their homes....Vice has reached out from the downtown district to the residence portions, where the business man's wife and daughters live."³⁰ The geography of moral insulation had suffered a fatal breach.

As Judge Sears' speech makes clear, issues of gender and sexuality were central to the anxiety that erupted in the wake of Mrs. Hollister's murder. In the moral order of Protestant domesticity, pure women were the pillar of the sacralized home, where they counterbalanced the evils of the public sphere.³¹ The threat of the sexual violation of respectable women struck at the very core of this domestic ideal. A week after Bessie Hollister's murder, *The Ravenswood Citizen* reminded ministers of their duty to sear the ideology of female purity into their congregations, implying that men's laxity in protecting such purity was partly at fault for the string of assaults on women: "The old idea that prevailed fifty or sixty years ago, in this country, of the sacredness of women has largely disappeared....Our pulpits need to preach more of purity of thought and life, of reverence for the sacred purity of women as the mothers, daughters, and sisters whom it is the duty of every true man to guard with his life."³² The attacks also led for calls to restrict women's movement on public streets. Chief of Police John M. Collins exhorted: "Women of Chicago! Stay indoors, unless accompanied by an escort."³³ At times, the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

³² *The Ravenswood Citizen*, January 20, 1906.

³³ "Youth Owns Brutal Murder of Woman," *Chicago Daily News*, January 13, 1906, 1. Interestingly, the populace—women in particular—seemed to resist such calls for seclusion. Mrs. W.C.H. Keough, a member of the Chicago Board of Education, protested: "The cry that women should not go unaccompanied along the streets of Chicago at night is a cry to which every woman should turn a deaf ear. It should be remembered that thousands upon thousands of women in Chicago are compelled by their

response of north side men veered dangerously close to vigilantism; at the North Shore Congregational meeting, Reverend Hall congratulated citizens on their restraint in the days after Hollister's murder, acknowledging, "In the last few weeks there were occasions when it would have taken only a word to suggest lynching."³⁴ The mobilization of the churches was intended to prevent any such rash actions.

Instead, the mass meeting at North Shore Congregational produced a pattern of action that would be followed in other citizen actions led by the north shore churches. First, activists identified the source of the moral problem. For decades, evangelical Protestants had worked to make it more difficult for saloons to operate, for exactly the kind of reasons iterated by the speakers at North Shore Congregational. As havens of vice, saloons threatened the idealized moral geography of middle-class Protestants on several levels. Saloons' very presence on the landscape provided the opportunity and temptation to drink. Furthermore, they were seen to be associated with the class behaviors of immigrants and Catholics and with the corrupt political bosses that these groups elected. Finally, saloons loosed drunken men and women onto the public street. Andy Croll observes that drunks "made it almost impossible to construct a meaningful moral geography of the streets. They were mobile 'dark spaces,' characters whose appearance was extremely difficult to predict."³⁵ When churches and saloons occupied

financial conditions to go out into the world and put their shoulders to the task of earning a living....They cannot obey the injunctions to remain indoors after dark without giving up hope of earning a living. They must be out after dark. Protection must be afforded them....The club-woman, the society woman, the woman of husband and family, the woman in comfortable circumstances must outreach a helping hand to the less fortunate sister who cannot afford to stay at home, no matter at what peril or at what cost she ventures out." *McClure's*, 72.

³⁴ "Anti-Crime Wave Reaching Climax," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1906, 1.

³⁵ Andy Croll, "Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame: Regulating Behaviour in the Public Spaces of the Late Victorian British Town," *Social History*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Oct., 1999): 257.

the same built environment, “The chances of a respectable [person] confronting an abusive drunkard were...increased.”³⁶ Saloons thus created a very real threat of increased disorder on the public street, with drunken men constituting a particular danger toward women. Critics explicitly linked “mashers”—young men who loitered on the street and aggressively accosted passing women—with the presence of saloons.

The other factor in the danger of the public street lay in a substandard level of police protection across the city. Chicago expanded so quickly in the decades before 1900 that the size of the police force did not keep pace with the needs of the populace, especially in outlying districts like the north shore. According to *McClure's* magazine, “Even in the most populous and frequented districts, a policeman was a rare sight. Nobody had a sense of security in the street, either in the business districts or the residential quarters.”³⁷ The north side precincts had half as many policemen on duty as the decade before, in which space of time the population of the districts had more than doubled.³⁸ Again, women were particularly vulnerable under this regime. Without protective surveillance, any dark space in the community presented a potential danger to them.

After identifying the source of the problem—the saloon and the lack of a police presence on the street—activists from the north shore churches enumerated a series of resolutions addressed to the mayor and aldermen. The aims of the community mobilization, they asserted, were twofold: to make the establishment of saloons—the

³⁶ Ibid., 258.

³⁷ “Chicago As Seen By Herself,” *McClure's Magazine*, May 1907: 69.

³⁸ “Aim at Safety,” *Chicago Chronicle*, January 15, 1906, 1.

putative source of crime—cost prohibitive and to create higher levels of surveillance on the street to protect women from the “mobile dark spaces” of the drunk and the masher. Activists strove to kill two birds with one stone by agitating for a doubling of the saloon license fee, which had remained steady at \$500 since 1883; the higher fee, they speculated, would force the most disreputable saloons out of business and the proceeds from the fee increase would pay for an enlarged police force. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that these efforts were coordinated among churches across Chicago: “The appeal for a doubled saloon license fee [to \$1,000] and increased and reorganized police force was almost universal throughout the city.”³⁹ To protect women in the interim, Buena Park residents hired special police to break up gangs of loitering young men, “street loafers...[who] were ‘amusing’ themselves by making remarks to passing women.”⁴⁰ The men of Sheridan Park, also viewing police protection as inadequate for the district, created another group called the Sheridan Park Protective Patrol, a vigilance association with uniformed guards to escort unattended women on public streets.

The North Shore Congregational meeting produced calls for the establishment of a more permanent protective association as well, a law and order league modeled on similar leagues in Hyde Park and Englewood. The North Side Law and Order League, with Reverend Gwyn of St. Simon’s as Secretary, employed a business agent and detectives to “hunt down and prosecute all violators of the law which the police fail to

³⁹ “Anti-Crime Wave Reaching Climax,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1906, 1.

⁴⁰ “Put New Energy Into Crime War,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 23, 1906, 1.

notice.”⁴¹ Within the organization, a Committee of 100 aggressively lobbied political figures for the \$1,000 saloon license.

With the agitation of churches and protective associations across the city, the question of a doubled saloon license fee dominated public life: “An extremely bitter fight ensued and for a time the \$1,000 license fee became the paramount issue, overshadowing everything.”⁴² On March 5, 1906, less than two months after the murder of Bessie Hollister, the City Council passed an ordinance fixing the saloon license fee at \$1,000. With the extra revenue, the police force immediately hired six hundred men, with another six hundred to be added over the course of the following year. As reported to the League of American Municipalities, “The effect of the increased force was noticeable at once. After a short time, Chicago became freer from crime than before...more violators of the law were brought to book and a greater sense of general safety made itself felt all over the city.”⁴³ The churches’ efforts to protect public space also resulted in the strengthening of the law and order movement. By 1907 the city counted at least nine incorporated community law and order leagues or protective associations within its borders, in addition to city-wide organizations like the Chicago Law and Order League, the Anticrime League, and the Citizen’s Association. In Ravenswood, R.J. Bennett of Ravenswood Congregational Church was president of the North Protective Association,

⁴¹ *The Clarion*, April 1906, v 8, no 5, 6.

⁴² Proponents of the \$1,000 saloon fee claimed that it would lead to an increase of three million dollars in city revenue, and allow for a thousand drop in the number of saloons in Chicago. Later analysis determined that such estimates had been more than optimistic, and as many saloon licenses were issued after the \$1,000 license as before. League of American Municipalities, “Chicago Today,” *10th Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities* (Chicago: Kirchner, Meckel, & Co., 1906), no page number.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

and in Buena and Sheridan Parks, Reverend Gwyn was the primary contact for the North Side Law and Order League.⁴⁴

Despite the achievements of the 1906 community mobilization, issues at stake in this movement would continue to be raised over the next few years by north shore churches. One of the resolutions coming out of the North Shore Congregational community meeting denounced the crime wave as “symptomatic of a general condition in this city of open riot, disorder, and crime bordering on anarchy.”⁴⁵ Unease about social disorder would continue to influence north shore residents’ reactions to the behaviors and values of the working class, especially as commercial amusements and a burgeoning stock of apartments drew this class more and more to the north shore. The preoccupation with feminine safety and purity would also continue to appear as north shore churches battled with the operators of commercial amusements. Even during the 1906 anti-crime crusade, at least one observer pinpointed dance halls as a culprit: “The public dance halls are the shame of Chicago....It is here that many young girls go whirling down the road to ruin in twostep time.”⁴⁶ As dance halls and other commercial amusements increasingly offered young women opportunities for sexual exploration outside the bonds of marriage, fears and anxieties about women in public only became more pronounced.

⁴⁴ Langland, James, *Chicago Daily News Almanac and Year-Book for 1908* (Chicago: The Chicago Daily News Co., 1907), 472.

⁴⁵ “Anti-Crime Wave Reaching Climax,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1906, 1.

⁴⁶ *McClure's*, 69.

The Rise of Commercial Amusement Culture

The rise of commercial amusement culture constituted an invasion of the north side moral geography that would prove far more lasting than the crime wave. Evangelical Protestant theology had long condemned any amusements outside of the sphere of home and church; from the 1840's on, "[n]ot only dancing but the circus, the theater, and cards all provoked the wrath of devout evangelicals across denominational lines."⁴⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, private clubs that met at churches or personal residences were the preferred leisure activities for church-going people. The North Shore Musical Club, for example, drew members from Buena Park, Sheridan Park, and Edgewater and met for practices and meetings each week at North Shore Congregational Church.⁴⁸ In terms of public leisure, the Protestant middle class and elite exhibited a preference for "ordered leisure spaces that preserved personal restraint and bodily integrity (through lack of crowding or jostling)," exemplified best by Olmstedian parks or the White City of the 1893 Columbian Exposition.⁴⁹ Moralists depicted commercial amusements that violated these restraints as dangerous temptations to be assiduously avoided. *The Clarion*, the church bulletin of Church of the Atonement in Edgewater, included this cautionary note to its congregation in 1900: "A conscientious Christian will not allow the world or any

⁴⁷ Ann Wagner, *Adversaries of Dance: From the Puritans to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), xii.

⁴⁸ "Among the Musician's [sic]," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 15, 1903, 42

⁴⁹ Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 81. To explain this class distinction between performative behaviors in public, Sean McCloud notes that "it was in the nineteenth century that the working class came to be associated with excess, emotion, and lack of self-control, while the middle class became linked with denial, reason, and self-restraint." See McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies: Class in American Religion and Religious Studies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 129; John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991); Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 99-100.

combination of allurements, temptations or distractions, to make him give up his church life....Wherever he is amid the Babylon of this world, his attitude ever will be that of exiles determined, at least, that their hearts and souls shall not be brought into captivity by the enemy.”⁵⁰

After 1900, these attitudes became increasingly anachronistic for many young Chicagoans. David Nasaw describes the three decades between 1890 and 1920 as the “era of public amusements,” a time when dance halls, amusement parks, baseball fields, moving picture theaters and other commercial entertainments proliferated across the landscapes of American cities.⁵¹ These new urban spaces were “physically, culturally, symbolically distinct from the world of late nineteenth-century socio-cultural norms.”⁵² Entertainment entrepreneurs took advantage of the loosening of social restraints by providing venues where young people could experiment with new modes of behavior, and marked these spaces with outlandish architectural details and the lavish use of electric lights and other modern technologies.

Commercial amusements threatened the staid moral geography of the elite residence district in three distinct ways. First, they competed visually with the churches and residences, often overshadowing the simpler suburban structures with their stylistic excesses. Second, they violated the strictures of evangelical Protestantism by offering

⁵⁰ *The Clarion*, Sept. 1900, vol. 2, no 7.

⁵¹ David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1. See also Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*; John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1925* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981); Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁵² Andrew L. Erdman, *Blue Vaudeville: Sex, Morals and the Mass Marketing of Amusement, 1895-1915* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2004), 26.

opportunities and space for the consumption of alcohol, the violation of the Sabbath, and the mixing of the sexes in previously unacceptable ways. Finally, these new spaces in the urban geography gave city dwellers of all walks of life, from all over the city, an opportunity to experiment with the poses of the “culture of personality” in relative anonymity, away from the moral oversight of ministers and neighbors. For all of these reasons, church men and women believed that the very presence of commercial amusements on the landscape both symbolized and directly contributed to the breakdown of the existing social hierarchy.

Cultural conservatives sensed a clear shift in the terrain of public and private behavior: “a new era had arisen in which commercial entertainment, controlled by industrially organized, financially motivated businessmen had replaced the church, family, and local community as the primary influence on individual morality.”⁵³ Such pecuniary motivations could not, moralists felt assured, produce positive influences; one Protestant author lamented, “A commercial management which is attuned to the cash-box cannot have harmonious morals.”⁵⁴ In Sheridan Park, Buena Park, and Ravenswood, where church groups clearly saw the potential threat, they sought to circumscribe the operations of commercial amusements either by forcing such enterprises to operate within a narrow window of behavior acceptable to conservatives or by denying entrepreneurs the ability to locate their enterprises in the community at all.

⁵³ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁴ Richard Henry Edwards, *Christianity and Amusements* (New York: Association Press, 1916), 18.

Ravenswood: “a moral peninsula”

In 1905, citizens of Ravenswood still clung to the place identity first established by the social and spatial dominance of Ravenswood Congregational Church in the 1870's and 1880's. However, with the planned extension of a branch of the North Western elevated train to Ravenswood in 1906, the city around the neighborhood's borders was quickly changing. An editorial in the *Ravenswood Citizen* raised the alarm: “Ravenswood might be described as a moral peninsula. The prohibition district is surrounded by saloons on all sides, except one, and there is no telling how rapidly an island will be formed unless vigilance is exercised.”⁵⁵ Still, the editorial continued, there was room for hope: “With nine or ten churches, a protective association and other organizations pledged for social betterment, we should escape, to a large extent, the evils which seem to almost engulf other parts of the city.”⁵⁶

Two episodes of conflict over space that took place in Ravenswood around the same time as the Hollister uproar illustrate the ways that church-based community activists worked to defend the moral geography of their community. Both times, church-going activists drew on previous understandings of Ravenswood's place identity to argue that commercial amusements did not belong. Geographer Deborah Martin observes that “for neighborhood-based organizations, place provides an important mobilizing discourse and identity for collective action.”⁵⁷ Martin characterizes such uses of place identity in

⁵⁵ *The Ravenswood Citizen*, February 3, 1906.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Deborah G. Martin, “‘Place-Framing’ as Place-Making: Constituting a Neighborhood for Organizing and Activism,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (Sep., 2003): 730.

community activism as “place frames,” discourses that obscure social differences by uniting residents around common ideals about their community. In the case of Ravenswood, churches and their congregations drew on the community’s place identity as a moral peninsula to create a place frame that excluded commercial amusements from an acceptable moral geography.

“Athletics on a high moral plane”

Ravenswood’s first major conflict over commercial amusements revolved around the construction of a baseball park across the street from Ravenswood’s only Catholic church. Catholics during this period generally expended little to no effort toward the preservation of the spatial hegemony of traditionally Protestant values; in Buena Park, St. Mary of the Lake parish never entered into the public controversies that followed Bessie Hollister’s murder.⁵⁸ But Our Lady of Lourdes parish—whose congregants were American-born and prosperous enough to live in Ravenswood—seems to have assimilated to the broader social and moral mores of Ravenswood. Parishioners’ stances on social issues hewed very closely to the values of their evangelical Protestant neighbors. Most notably, the parish participated actively in the Catholic temperance

⁵⁸ For urban Catholics, clustered in cohesive ethnic neighborhoods that centered on the parish church, church and neighborhood were essentially the same entity. The sacred space of the parish comprehended the entire community, creating a unified moral geography that needed no enforcing. See Ellen Skerrett, Edward R. Kantowicz, and Steven M. Avella, *Catholicism, Chicago Style* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993), 137-168. Once Catholics moved out of ethnic neighborhoods into Protestant-dominated areas like the north shore, however, the Catholic parish was just one element of a wider religious marketplace. St. Mary of the Lake’s reticence in the furor surrounding Bessie Hollister’s murder may be attributed to the relative infancy of the parish, only four years old at the beginning of 1906.



Figure 30. Our Lady of Lourdes church, early 1900's. Chicago Public Library, Sulzer Regional Library.

movement and sponsored a thriving “Lourdes Total Abstinence Society” at a time when most immigrant Catholics opposed prohibition.⁵⁹

In Ravenswood, the Sunday closing of public amusements provoked particularly strong opinions, and Our Lady of Lourdes joined the community's Protestant churches in a robust movement for strict Sabbath observance. Once again, the *Ravenswood Citizen* expressed the stance of its religious readers: “The open beer halls and dance resorts which flare out their vileness on the peaceful Sabbath Day, made holy by the strict observance given it by righteous men and women for generations, are a blight to

⁵⁹ Proponents of the Catholic Total Abstinence movement, often Irish-American Catholics, rhetorically linked Catholic temperance with upward mobility and economic security. Diedre Moloney observes that “[m]embers of total abstinence groups sought to challenge stereotypes of Irish immigrants as intemperate and to achieve a reputation of respectability among Americans as a whole. For some Catholics these concerns reflected a growing identification with the values of the American middle class, and sometimes membership within it.” Diedre M. Moloney, “Combatting ‘Whiskey’s Work’: The Catholic Temperance Movement in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 16, no. 3 (1998): 2. John Quinn seconds this contention, framing Catholic temperance as the “most effective means of breaking down longstanding stereotypes...and gaining entry into the American mainstream.” John F. Quinn, “Father Mathew’s Disciples: American Catholic Support for Temperance, 1840-1920,” *Church History* 65, no. 4 (1996): 624. Both of these studies of Catholic temperance overlook, however, the distinct experience of upwardly mobile suburban Catholics in Protestant-dominated communities and how such a context might have informed their temperance activism.

American civilization.”⁶⁰ Commercial amusements posed a serious danger to the monopoly churches held on proper use of the Lord’s Day, especially if moral strictures against such amusements weakened. Ministers worried that “houses of worship, long a (literally) sacrosanct cultural locale, would soon be subject to the whims of free market competition.”⁶¹ The clerical leaders of Ravenswood had already observed the tendency of pick-up baseball games to interfere with local boys’ attendance at Sunday School and they attempted to sweep their professional opposition from the landscape before it could gain a foothold.⁶²

The decade between 1900 and 1910 was a golden era of semiprofessional baseball in Chicago, when the leading independent semipro clubs could compete with the city’s major league teams.⁶³ Most of these teams were located on the south and west sides of the city, but in the spring of 1905, one of the era’s best known managers of semiprofessional baseball, Billy Niesen, calculated that the affluent north shore communities could handsomely support an independent semipro club.⁶⁴ Naming his team

⁶⁰ *The Ravenswood Citizen*, Editorial, February 10, 1906.

⁶¹ Erdman, 27.

⁶² “Suburban,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 10, 1885, 16.

⁶³ For a longer—and fascinating—discussion of semipro baseball teams and leagues in the United States after 1900, see Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The People’s Game* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 258-275.

⁶⁴ Stuart Shea, *Wrigley Field: The Unauthorized Biography* (City: Potomac Books, 2004), 67. Under Niesen’s management, the Gunthers started out as an independent semipro team, but in 1909 joined the newly reorganized Chicago City League, which would become one of the preeminent semipro leagues in the country. With teams like the Logan Squares and the West Ends, the City League also included a few African American teams from the South Side, including the legendary Rube Foster’s Leland Giants. It was a “heavy” league, meaning that the club charged admission and at least some of the players were paid (as opposed to “light” teams, which passed a hat or played for bets with the other team). Talented players could make as much as a hundred or a hundred and fifty dollars a week, good enough money that members of the Chicago Cubs were known to moonlight in the league on weekends under different names. Supposedly, Ty Cobb threatened to join the Logan Squares during a contract fight with the Detroit Tigers over the winter of

the Gunthers after the club's financial sponsor, Niesen leased an empty lot in the eastern part of Ravenswood, kitty corner from Our Lady of Lourdes, and erected a partially enclosed baseball field with a sturdy grandstand.⁶⁵ Father F.N. Perry, the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, objected to the placement of the field immediately, but the newly elected Mayor Edward Dunne brokered a compromise "as long as the games are orderly."⁶⁶

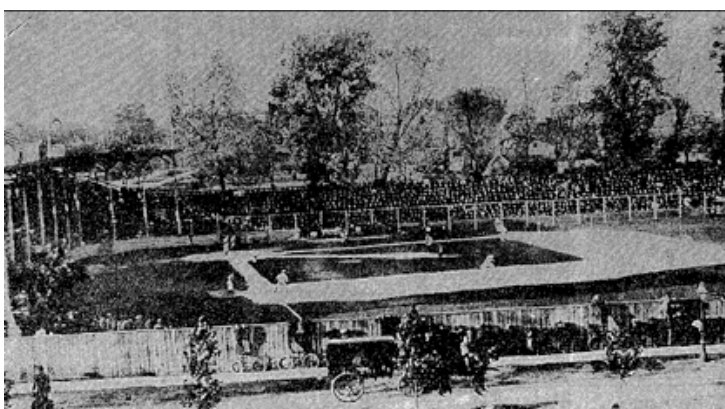


Figure 31. Gunther Ball Park.
Chicago Daily Tribune.

Father Perry's initial acquiescence lay in the fact that baseball, in and of itself, did not constitute a dire threat to the moral geography of Ravenswood. Even the evangelical Protestant worldview conceived of amateur sports as entirely compatible with a moral way of life.⁶⁷ Addressing the 1901 Jubilee Convention of the YMCA, developmental psychologist G. Stanley Hall asserted that "[c]ompetitive athletics in general are the most

1906-1907. At their peak, the Logan Squares could draw up to 15,000 people to games. Seymour, 267; Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White: A History of Legendary Black Players and All-Black Professional Teams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 64.

⁶⁵ On the northeast corner of Ashland and Leland, the current site of Chase Park.

⁶⁶ "Baseball Fails to Annoy," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 24, 1905, 7

⁶⁷ See Gunther Barth, *City People: The Rise of Modern City Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 183-184.

natural dumb-bells for the development of moral muscle in the young man.”⁶⁸

Furthermore, the community had a history of involvement with amateur athletics. Boys had long played baseball in the open field behind Ravenswood Congregational Church and in 1890 R.J. Bennett collected subscriptions for an organized Ravenswood Athletic Association, to “conduct amateur athletics on a high moral plane.”⁶⁹ Ravenswood churches also sponsored baseball and basketball teams that played in church leagues around the city. As long as the Gunther Park prohibited the grossest of moral abuses associated with professional baseball—gambling and drinking—area churches grudgingly tolerated it and the 1905 baseball season passed without public incident.

This uneasy détente expired when Niesen rented out the unused baseball park for a football game in December, 1905. An enraged Father Perry dispatched a letter to Mayor Dunne, with a corresponding copy going to the editors of the *Ravenswood Citizen*, registering “a vigorous protest in the interest of decency” against “one of the noisiest and most vulgar gatherings we have ever witnessed in Ravenswood.”⁷⁰ The sight of women dancing down the public street accompanied by a marching band particularly galled Father Perry. The incident must have been under discussion in church parlors and living rooms across Ravenswood, for by January 13, 1906, an anonymous subscriber of the *Ravenswood Citizen* demanded to know if Father Perry had received a response from Mayor Dunne on the issue. The subscriber continued, “The church evidently takes a firm

⁶⁸ YMCA of the USA, *The Jubilee of Work for Young Men in North America: A Report of the Jubilee Convention of North American Young Men's Christian Associations* (New York: The International Committee of Young Men's Christian Associations, 1901), 196.

⁶⁹ “Ravenswood Will Try Athletics,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 5, 1890, 10.

⁷⁰ Father F.N. Perry, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Ravenswood Citizen*, December 23, 1905.

stand against such disorder and disturbance as taken place during the last eight months...[T]he disgraceful football game...was only one epitome of the whole season....Will the pastors of other churches in Ravenswood follow Fr. Perry with letters to the 'Citizen,' giving their views?"⁷¹ Within a week, Ravenswood's Protestant ministers demonstrated their solidarity with Father Perry by forming a ministers' union, the first action of which was the publication of "A Protest against Sunday Baseball for 1906." The signatures of thirteen ordained ministers living in the community, including W.A. Lloyd, who had retired from Ravenswood Congregational sixteen years before, accompanied this protest.⁷²

This Sunday baseball protest seems to have been largely ineffective. The 1906 baseball season began on schedule in March, and the Gunthers' record in their sophomore season showed them to be one of the best teams in the city. Each weekend, thousands of men—and some women—surged into the ballpark from across the north side and beyond to cheer on the local team.⁷³ And each Sunday afternoon, their shouts of support for the



Figure 32. *The Gunthers, 1906.*
Library of Congress.

⁷¹ "A Subscriber Wants Information," *The Ravenswood Citizen*, January 13, 1906.

⁷² "Ministers' Union Formed," *The Ravenswood Citizen*, January 20, 1906.

⁷³ Gunther Barth sees baseball parks as the province of urban masculinity, but according to contemporary newspaper reports, women attended Gunther Park as well.

team echoed through the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, disturbing afternoon Mass and exacerbating tensions held over from January. Father Perry demanded that the mayor revoke Gunther Park's license.

Father Perry articulated his opposition to Gunther Park as a defense of strict Sabbath observance, perhaps knowing that this position would be an attractive stance for his Protestant neighbors. He induced Archbishop Quigley to enter the fray with a statement that "the games violate the proper observance of the Sabbath" and convened a mass meeting on the subject of Sunday baseball at the Ravenswood YMCA.⁷⁴ The YMCA mass meeting demonstrated just how contentious the issue had become in Ravenswood. Defenders of the ballpark came out in force, demonstrating a strong vein of support for the ballpark within the community, but the *Ravenswood Citizen* noted approvingly that "an unusually large number of church-going people" arrived to augment the ranks of the opposition.⁷⁵ The ministers of Ravenswood Congregational, Ravenswood Methodist Episcopal, All Saints Episcopal, Ravenswood Presbyterian, Ravenswood English Lutheran, and Fifth United Presbyterian Church joined Father Perry in inveighing against the desecration of the Sabbath carried out by the Gunthers. Fifth United Presbyterian's Reverend William H. Fulton, who presided over the meeting, encouraged all church-going attendees to write personal letters to the mayor advocating the discontinuation of Sunday baseball. The influence of the pastors and the preponderance of church-goers carried the meeting, which ended with the selection of a Committee of

⁷⁴ "Sunday Baseball Condemned," *The Ravenswood Citizen*, March 10, 1906.

⁷⁵ "Hold Mass Meeting and Denounce Sunday Baseball," *The Ravenswood Citizen*, March 17, 1906.



Figures 33 and 34. Gunther Park in the context of the Ravenswood community. These photographs from 1906 give a sense of Gunther Field's intrusion on the residential neighborhood. On the left, the spire of Our Lady of Lourdes is visible through the grandstand. On the right, looking west through the outfield, one glimpses the low roofline of the residential district. Library of Congress.

Fifteen, including eight ministers, to present the case for closing down Gunther Field to Mayor Dunne.

The letter presented to the mayor by the Committee of Fifteen illustrates how activists conveyed their opposition to the park in terms of Ravenswood's place identity as a moral peninsula. Calling it "little short of sacrilegious [sic] to permit the game to be played in such close proximity to the House of God while services are going on within its walls," the Committee emphasized that the baseball park's presence compromised the respectability of the whole community: "the games attract an enormous crowd of people from all parts of the city [and] connect the name of this locality with the free and easy observance of Sunday." The letter also tied the ball park to the pernicious influence of the saloon and the corruption of youth, arguing that the park enhanced the value of the saloons on Ravenswood's borders and displayed beer and whiskey advertisements that "undoubtedly make a bad impression on the minds of the hundreds of boys and young

men who attend these games.”⁷⁶ The dispute was now no longer simply about the disruption of Our Lady of Lourdes’ afternoon services; the ballpark’s very existence, by these arguments, profaned the respectability and morality of the entire Ravenswood community.

Billy Niesen mounted a spirited defense of his park. He accused his opponents of an inordinate desire for social control: “There are, no doubt, numerous people and churches who object to Sunday ball on general principles whose puritanical spirit would make the people all go to Sunday-school in the afternoon.” Instead, he argued, most people “believe in personal liberty [and] they choose to do as they think best for their comfort and pleasure and do not care to be dictated to by others.”⁷⁷ Moreover, Niesen contended, even the Catholic Church sanctioned harmless amusements for workers on their one day off. Opponents of such amusements “wish to crush and smother the exultant joys that go forth from their happy throats...[on] Sunday, that day of all days, when they are free from a week’s toil and work to breathe the air of freedom and care in the open.”⁷⁸ In the modern city, the entrepreneur implied, the soul could be better refreshed through joy and communion with the crowd than through the confinement of Sunday school.

The competition between the ethos of traditional Protestantism and that of the modern market was precisely what clergy in Ravenswood and across the country feared. Religious opposition to the new amusement culture sprang from a general anxiety that these semi-public spaces would threaten the hegemony of the church and the Christian

⁷⁶ “Protest Against Gunther Baseball Park,” *The Ravenswood Citizen*, March 24, 1906.

⁷⁷ “Reply from Gunther Ball Park,” *The Ravenswood Citizen*, March 31, 1906.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

home. The root of the threat lay in a struggle over who determined the nature of morality.

As historian Andrew Erdman has observed, “A new structure of morality, in which the permissible equaled the commercially viable, threatened to replace an older paradigm in which culturally authorized elites, or at the very least parents, decided what should and should not be disseminated to the masses.”⁷⁹ As commercial amusements became more and more popular, their presence on the landscape gave symbolic representation to this new, subversive structure of morality, in which individual liberty trumped traditional social controls.

In Ravenswood, appeals to individual liberty did trump social controls—at least as far as Gunther Park went. After meeting with the clerical delegation from Ravenswood, Mayor Dunne declined to revoke the Gunthers’ license. The opponents of the park may be surmised to have reacted with discouragement when they read in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* that summer that the mayor himself spent the Fourth of July at Gunther Park watching a south side African-American team defeat the Gunthers by a score of 4 to 1.⁸⁰ But after the controversies of 1906, Niesen agreed to crack down on disorderly behavior that reflected poorly on the community. By September, even the *Ravenswood Citizen*, which tended to champion the causes of the Protestant elites, published an editorial vindicating Gunther Park: “Hundreds of residents of Ravenswood and Sheridan Park will testify that the Park has been conducted in an orderly manner...the game played last Monday, Labor Day, was ...a clean, wholesome exhibition, minus rowdyism and profanity and other features which so often disgust

⁷⁹ Erdman, 24.

⁸⁰ “3 Dunnes Hurt; 7 Escape,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 5, 1906, 3.

audiences.”⁸¹ By maintaining order and respectability in the Gunthers’ ball field, Niesen reached a tenable understanding with the churches in the community. The church-goers of the community could not control what people did with their Sundays, but they could control *how* they did it.⁸²

Amusement Parks: “We do not care to have them in Ravenswood”

At the end of 1906, word spread that a company had proposed to build an amusement park on a large empty lot at the western border of Ravenswood.⁸³ The centerpiece of this amusement park would be the 100-foot-high paste-board replica of the Tyrolean Alps that had visually dominated the Pike, the concession and amusement area of the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. After failing in attempts to preserve the Pike as an amusement park in St. Louis, developers apparently hoped to recreate this popular attraction on the outskirts of Chicago, surrounding it with rides and a beer garden.⁸⁴ The

⁸¹ “Editorial,” *The Ravenswood Citizen*, September 8, 1906.

⁸² Niesen’s speculations about the profitability of a north side team paid proved sound. The Gunthers certainly had no problem gaining spectators; the field accommodated 5,000, and turned hundreds of people away at each game. In the end, it was the free market, not morality, that did away with Gunther Field. In 1913, the Chicago Whales, Chicago’s third big league team in the newly organized Federal League, built a huge park at Addison and Clark, only a mile south of Gunther Park. Until this point, with the Cubs playing on the west side and the White Stockings playing on the south side, the semipro Gunthers had ruled the north side, but “the coming of organized baseball left the semi-pros stranded in a territory they once had to themselves.” By 1915, when the Federal League folded and the Cubs took over Weeghman Park—renamed Wrigley Field in 1926—the Gunthers had already closed down for business. “Niesen Recalls Golden Era of Semi-Pro Ball,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 31, 1936, B5.

⁸³ Between Leavitt and Western and Sunnyside and Montrose.

⁸⁴ “A company was arranging to construct a park in that territory to accommodate ‘The Tyrolean Alps,’ now in St. Louis, as well as a beer garden.” “Protest Against Amusement Park,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 12, 1907, 4. Soon after the closing of the St. Louis fair, a proposal emerged to preserve the Pike as an amusement park, with a beach, sports stadium, and illuminated tower. This plan was killed by nearby Washington University, which opposed the negative influence of an amusement park so close to its students. Diane Rademacher, *Still Shining! Discovering Lost Treasures from the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair* (St. Louis: Virginia Publishing Corporation, 2003), 12.



Figure 35. The Pike's Tyrolean Alps. Souvenir Postcard, 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.

extension of the Ravenswood El in 1906, allowing access to the site from all over the city, combined with the success of the St. Louis Fair and the amusement park craze in general promised to make this park a resounding commercial success.

Ravenswood's church-going citizens lost no time in organizing to prevent the incursion of the amusement park. A hurried effort, organized at Ravenswood English Lutheran Church, to push a prohibition district through the liquor licensing committee of the City Council failed when aldermen from the city's central wards remained unmoved by the moral arguments of "church members and reformers" and defeated the measure by a vote of six to four.⁸⁵ When members of the delegation invited the aldermen to attend a church meeting in Ravenswood and ascertain the true depth of the community's adamant opposition to the project, several aldermen chuckled: "O, no. You don't get us that way.... We will take the matter up, but not in the church; we have seen that done before."⁸⁶ As she exited the chamber, an incensed Mrs. John McCauliff fumed to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, "For the first time I can see the necessity and value of woman's

⁸⁵ "Aldermen Favor Amusement Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 19, 1907, 3.

⁸⁶ "Protest Against Amusement Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 12, 1907, 4.

suffrage. From this moment I am going to fight to place the ballot in the hands of women.” She paused. “I wonder if any of those aldermen have families?”⁸⁷ This flustered remark would prove to be the key to the entire amusement park controversy, which saw women’s private influence in churches and in the home spill over into the public sphere. By framing the matter as a woman’s issue and articulating opposition to the park as the defense of family and home, Ravenswood citizens would effect a stunning reversal of the political tide.

Unbowed, a few days after their defeat at the hands of the licensing committee amusement park opponents organized a mass meeting at the Ravenswood YMCA. The hall was filled to capacity, with every church in Ravenswood represented. A third of the attendees, a reporter noted, were women. Signs bearing the slogan “Will You Help Save Your Homes?” in big, black letters were scattered among the crowd.⁸⁸ R.J. Bennett, one of the pillars of Ravenswood Congregational Church, led off:

We are gathered here in the interests of our homes, our children, and future generations; in the interests of ourselves and our community.... We are here to enforce laws and rights which are ordinarily sneered at, but which really have stood for all that is best and noblest in the character of the home. We are here to prevent the invasion of that which is likely to perpetuate the vice and crime which it would bring here on the Christian Sabbath day...⁸⁹

Over and over, exerted citizens characterized the proposed amusement park as an “invasion,” summoning the image of rowdies and hoodlums swarming over sacred ground.

⁸⁷ “Aldermen Favor Amusement Park,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

⁸⁸ “Amusement Park Project Fought,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 21, 1907, 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

An amusement park threatened the purified moral geography of Ravenswood even more than Gunther Park. Where baseball parks generally catered to men, amusement parks catered to both genders, allowing for easy mingling between young men and women, a revolution in public socializing. In addition, while a baseball game presented entertainment of a desexualized nature, amusement parks offered thrilling rides that created sexual excitement and dark spaces in which to act on it. Because of their size and complexity, amusement parks could not be regulated by traditional agents of morality, which made them “potentially dangerous geographical [spaces, ones] perhaps where promiscuous men and women could interact away from the prying eyes of family and clergy.”⁹⁰ Such “sites of sexual license” posed a clear danger to the home by tempting girls to compromising their feminine purity.⁹¹

Furthermore, for both genders, part of the amusement park’s attraction involved a relinquishment of control on the part of the patrons, anathema to the evangelical worldview. With rides, beer gardens, and dance pavilions serenaded by live bands, amusement parks fostered the excitement of social upheaval, a carnival atmosphere where visitors could shed their every-day identities for a new realm of possibility. The architecture of amusement parks reflected this carnival atmosphere by playing upon tropes of fantasy and exoticism. Amusement parks made liberal use of modern technologies like electricity as well, awing patrons with spectacular lighting displays. In essence, the excess of the amusement park environment was designed to “throw people

⁹⁰ Erdman, 26.

⁹¹ Deutsch, 81.

off balance,” in the process releasing them from the restraints of Victorian Protestant culture.⁹²

Most of the objections expressed at the YMCA mass meeting therefore emerged out of concerns for the moral stability of the community. Supporters of temperance in Ravenswood had annexed themselves to the city in 1889 under the condition that the community remain dry, and they abhorred the prospect of a beer garden that would “attract an undesirable element”—hundreds of thousands strong—to the vicinity each weekend: “we do not propose to submit to having our residence district ruined through an amusement park where liquor is sold next door to our houses.”⁹³ Sanctioning a space for this undesirable element would pollute the pure moral geography of Ravenswood with an “unmoral [sic] atmosphere.”⁹⁴ The youth of Ravenswood would be “compelled to see the debauchery that accompanies an amusement resort of the kind that this is.”⁹⁵ Undesirable businesses would follow to further pollute the moral space of the community: “as everybody knows, [this objectionable park] will be accompanied by saloons, private dining rooms, and other evils of the sort.”⁹⁶ For all of these reasons, the very homes and families of traditional-minded citizens of Ravenswood hung in the balance. They viewed

⁹² See John Kasson, *Amusing the Million*. Quote is from 181.

⁹³ “Amusement Park Project Fought,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 21, 1907, 9; “Urge Vote Against Park,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 26, 1907, 16.

⁹⁴ “Amusement Park Project Fought,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 21, 1907, 9.

⁹⁵ “Aldermen Favor Amusement Park,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 19, 1907, 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

opposition to the amusement park as “the fight of the men and women who wish to keep sacred their homes.”⁹⁷

The complaints expressed at the meeting point to a greater anxiety about and coded opposition to lower-class behaviors. The democratic ethos of amusement parks—allowing in anyone who could pay the fee—meant that a wide variety of social behaviors were on display. The multitudes who flocked to Riverview Park just a few miles south of Ravenswood came not just from upper middle class neighborhoods around the park, but also from ethnic neighborhoods all over the city: “[Riverview] drew heavily from Polish, Irish, Italian, Bohemian, Scandinavian, and Jewish immigrant neighborhoods as well as from the surrounding prosperous ones.”⁹⁸ In Ravenswood, particularly, which had early on laid out the boundaries of its moral geography and whose churches had so recently failed in their push to close Gunther Park, the entire episode expressed the clash of two value systems, one based in evangelical Protestant culture and its traditionally defined “moral” behaviors and the other reaching for freedom and amusement outside of traditional confines.

Thekla Ellen Joiner observes that conservative Protestants in America often used domestic pretexts in their opposition to social change: “By staking out the moral high ground in defense of home and family...[they] stridently [legitimized their] social and political activism with religious piety.”⁹⁹ Ravenswood’s church-going citizens were no different, cloaking protectionist attitudes in the language of morality and respectability.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Lauren Ravinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure: Women, Movies and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (City: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 140.

⁹⁹ Joiner, 237.

Activists against the amusement park turned to the churches for leadership in the fight, assigning the ministers of each of the principal churches in Ravenswood to lead a Committee of 100.¹⁰⁰ Men on the committee divvied up the responsibilities of visiting every alderman in the city to express Ravenswood's disapproval of the project.

Meanwhile, the women of Ravenswood decided to pay personal visits the aldermen's wives, asking these women "to place themselves in the position of the wives and mothers of Ravenswood, then to use their influence to get their husbands to vote for the establishment of the new prohibition district."¹⁰¹ The Ravenswood women explicitly framed their mission in terms of "the Golden Rule," expressing confidence that the wives of the aldermen would respond in the spirit of the Protestant value system in which they were approached. The confidence of the women of Ravenswood in this strategy did not prove misplaced. Soon after their intentions became public, reporters from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* interviewed the wives of seven aldermen and "every woman declared emphatically that she favored the shutting out of the proposed amusement park in the residence district."¹⁰² Mrs. Winfield P. Dunn, the wife of Ravenswood's own alderman, responded specifically in terms of the golden rule: "I sympathize with the view of the Ravenswood women, and think their position is right. I would hate to have an amusement park come into the neighborhood where I live, and therefore I can appreciate how the

¹⁰⁰ The first seven members of the committee listed were: Rev. I.W. Corey, Ravenswood Baptist; Rev. S.L. Selden, Ravenswood Presbyterian; Rev. A.B. Penniman, Ravenswood Congregational; Rev. G.F. Hall, Bush Temple church; Rev. F.E. Perry and Rev. Dorree, Our Lady of Lourdes; Rev. R. J. Wyckoff, Ravenswood Methodist—the same ministers to whom the community had turned in the effort to close Gunther Park.

¹⁰¹ "Ravenswood Men to Call on Council Members, Women on Their Wives," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 23, 1907, 7

¹⁰² "Wives of Solons Aid 'Dry' Fight," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 24, 1907, 5

people of Ravenswood feel.”¹⁰³ Other aldermen’s wives agreed “that the influence of such places is bad on children of the neighborhood, and young boys and girls who grow up in localities where amusement resorts exist and where liquor is sold to the accompaniment of music and other attractions.”¹⁰⁴ Several of the wives echoed Mrs. Charles Werno in saying of their alderman husbands, “I know he will do what is right.”¹⁰⁵ When the Lourdes Total Abstinence Society expressed a plan to intercede with the wife of Mayor Dunne himself, the mayor replied that intercession was unnecessary: “Mrs. Dunne constituted herself a committee of one in the interest of the ordinance and waited upon me to urge my signature.”¹⁰⁶

All of this lobbying gave the Ravenswood faction great confidence in the days before the full city council vote on February 18, 1907. A new petition against the amusement park gained the signatures of nearly every resident of Ravenswood, and activists articulated an alternative plan, asking for a public park in the contested area instead of the amusement park. Only a little over a month before, the measure had failed in committee with only four aye votes, but on the day that the vote came before the full City Council, fifty aldermen voted in favor of the prohibition district with only eight against. The agitation of Ravenswood’s church-goers carried the day in spectacular fashion. In the final vote, the notorious saloon owners-cum-aldermen John “Hinky Dink” Kenna and “Bathhouse” John Coughlin voted nay. Yet even Coughlin expressed

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ “‘Drys’ Look for Victory,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 18, 1907, 2.

sympathy with Ravenswood faction's arguments. "But," he continued, "I cannot consistently, coming as I do from the First ward, vote in favor of a territory where no saloons can be established."¹⁰⁷

The amusement park episode highlights the conflict between "traditional" moral values and the values promoted by commercial leisure, between the strict controls over space in Ravenswood and the openness of Coughlin's First ward, between suburban ideals and urban realities. It also illustrates central role of church leadership in issues of control over public space, and the consummate importance of political organizing in these efforts as the city became more and more bureaucratized. Churches created a strong and easily mobilized pool of citizens, with wide geographical representation within the community. Finally, the episode illustrates the crucial role that women played in shoring up the home-based evangelical Protestant worldview. In their appeals to the wives of aldermen, the women of Ravenswood drew upon the Protestant image of woman as defender of the family, the home, and moral purity. Such appeals circumvented the masculine, public, democratic political system—and corrupt aldermen like Coughlin and Kenna—by prevailing instead on upon the Christian values and moral influence of women and the home.

In 1907, Ravenswood's church-going citizens were still assured of the cultural dominance of their value system. Two decades later, a resident mused on why Ravenswood remained a quiet residential district, when neighborhoods along the lakeshore had been overtaken by residential hotels, movie theaters, dance halls, and department stores:

¹⁰⁷ "'Victory for the 'Drys,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1907, 2.

Perhaps the reason [Ravenswood] has not gone ahead with the surrounding neighborhoods is because the home loving people in the community have wanted to keep it a residence district, and every time anything which would spell advancement was started someone got up a petition to prevent it. Oh, they were always getting up petitions to prevent them from being disturbed. When the streetcar line was proposed, when there was agitation for a bus line, and when apartments were beginning to be built attempts were made by petition to prohibit them.¹⁰⁸

The central role of Ravenswood's churches in creating community identity allowed church-going citizens—especially women—a greater degree of authority in determining the path that Ravenswood's development would take. The influence of Ravenswood's churches, combined with its long-standing place identity as a moral peninsula, provided a clear place-frame for neighborhood activism. Such activism set Ravenswood on a different course than its neighbors to the east.

The Creation of Uptown

Sheridan Park and Buena Park quickly developed more urban identities than Ravenswood. The central street car transfers and the elevated line to Evanston ran directly through these two neighborhoods, making them more desirable to commercial entrepreneurs and more accessible to shoppers and entertainment-seekers.¹⁰⁹ Some of the

¹⁰⁸ Palmer, Uptown II, doc. 60, 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Outlying business centers were a new development in Chicago neighborhood life, springing up across the city where street-car lines met or came near elevated railway stations. Several factors contributed to these commercial districts. Chain stores began creating retail outlets near where consumers lived, where forty outlying stores could be rented at the same cost as one store in the Loop. As people started seeking entertainment nearer to their homes, theatrical promoters also commenced building of theaters outside Loop. Neighborhood banks were a part of this local business trend as well; before the 1893 World's Fair, the only bank that was outside of the Loop was located at the Stockyards, but by the nineteen-teens, neighborhood banks were commonplace. Finally, the character of the transportation system promoted outlying business centers. Between 1910 and 1916, the population within 4 miles of State and Madison stayed static at a little more than a million, while the population from 4 to 7 miles increased from 460,000 to 1,076,000. As the population moved further from the central city, more and more people relied on street cars that "were adequate to carry people to and from outlying factories and neighborhood centers...[but]

most dramatic and rapid growth in Chicago at this time took place around or in direct relation to the Wilson Avenue elevated station. Real estate values doubled in the five years after 1904 and single-family homes and luxury nine-room apartments gave way to new one and two room kitchenette apartment buildings that catered to single men and women and childless couples.¹¹⁰ This new demographic in Sheridan Park and Buena Park looked less to the home and church for entertainment, turning instead to commercialized forms of public leisure. Saloons and small dance halls proliferated and theatres dotted the landscape.¹¹¹ At a meeting at St. Simon's in Sheridan Park, a parishioner complained: "my parish is...infested by low saloons and dives where vicious men and women of low type are harbored."¹¹² By 1910, the processes of urbanization that began with annexation of Lake View to Chicago in 1889 had radically altered the north shore suburbs.

The beaches along Lake Michigan emerged as the great flashpoint of conflict between churches and the rise of "questionable amusements." As the population of the north shore skyrocketed, the lakeshore came into greater and greater use. Long gone were the days when local picnickers walked to an empty beach on a Sunday afternoon. Now, three privately owned beaches—Wilson, Clarendon, and North Shore—catered to hordes of young people from all over the city. The first glimmer of protest surfaced in 1908,

were a slow medium for reaching the Loop." Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago: The Relationship of the Growth of Chicago to the Rise in its Land Values, 1830-1933* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933), 226. Neighborhood business centers reached their apex in the nineteen-teens and -twenties.

¹¹⁰ By 1908, the population around Wilson station had reached 100,000. Hoyt, 216.

¹¹¹ In October of 1910, when the combined Ravenswood and Sheridan Park Protective Association met, "The question of amusements and dance halls was considered and discussions of great interest were held." "Protective Association Holds Interesting Meeting," *Ravenswood Citizen*, October 29, 1910.

¹¹² "Dean Urges Winter Relief for the Poor of Chicago," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 23, 1908, 5.

when promoters applied to construct one more bathing beach and amusement park business, “a sort of Coney Island” according to its detractors. Residents who attended a mass meeting about this newest application were inflamed. The alderman, Winfield Dunn, observed, “If there is sufficient attraction we will have half of South Clark street, South Canal street, and West Lake street out here on Saturday and Sunday nights.”¹¹³ Citizens circulated a petition and enjoined Alderman Dunn to introduce before the city council an ordinance governing the regulation of bathing beaches. Ultimately, lawyers for the city denied the application for a license, arguing that “[t]he operation of the beach would be a menace to the public health, and morals, and to public comfort.”¹¹⁴

But complaints against the existing private beaches continued to mount. Mayor Fred Busse, who defeated Edward Dunne in the 1907 mayoral election, received grievances “that men scantily clad obtruded themselves upon the notice of women at the beach to an extent which was insulting.”¹¹⁵ Crowds at the beach were characterized as “noisy persons...immoral in character, profane of language, and nuisances in other ways.”¹¹⁶ A report on the beaches stated that “drinking resorts have prospered because of

¹¹³ “Storm Over Bathing Beach,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 15, 1908, 12. In many ways, Alderman Winfield Dunn was the political face of moral activism in Chicago in the beginning of the twentieth century. According to a book about Presbyterian influence in Chicago published in 1907, “Few members of the council have stood out more conspicuously of late years than alderman Winfield P. Dunn of the Twenty-fifth Ward. Under his leadership the committee on license, assisted by the city press and the great host of Christian people, carried through safely the ordinance increasing the saloon license from \$500 to \$1000. [Dunn also played a central role in working to stop the Tyrolean Alps amusement park in Ravenswood.] Mr. Dunn is an elder in the Fullerton Avenue church and is head of the W. P. Dunn, Printing & Publishing Co.” Andrew Stevenson, John J. Halsey, James G.K. McClure, and James Gore King, *Chicago: Preeminently a Presbyterian City* (Chicago: Winona Publishing Co., 1907), 33.

¹¹⁴ “Wilson Avenue Beach Suit Answered by City’s Lawyer,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 12, 1908, 12.

¹¹⁵ “Ready to Rule on Beaches,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 1, 1908, 8.

¹¹⁶ “Asphalt Contract is Let,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 27, 1909, 20.



Figure 36. Wilson Avenue Bathing Beach. Chicago History in Postcards.

the bathing beaches in the vicinity,” with both enterprises working in concert to attract “hoodlums, toughs, and highwaymen.”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, charged a city complaint, the Wilson Avenue bathing beach in particular had “caused a depreciation of \$2,000,000 in neighboring property values, has demoralized the pupils of the Graeme Stewart school, and has interfered with worship in the North Shore Congregational church.”¹¹⁸ Here, in a nutshell, lay the root of neighborhood opposition to the beaches: they attracted undesirable people whose behavior was indecent and, at times, immoral, and this behavior spread from the beaches to the surrounding neighborhood, both depreciating property values and disrupting the lives of respectable people.

The issue reached a crisis point in the summer of 1911. That year, the month of June saw record-setting temperatures, with heat-related deaths recorded in tenements across the city.¹¹⁹ The need for bathing beaches among the city’s working class and poor

¹¹⁷ “Mayor to Revoke Beach Licenses,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 15, 1911, 6. “Beach Foes See Mayor Today,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 20, 1911, 6.

¹¹⁸ “Asphalt Contract is Let,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 27, 1909, 20.

¹¹⁹ “Heat Kills Seven; Four Men Drown; Relief in Doubt,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 3, 1911, 1.

was widely acknowledged, but north shore residents continued to oppose the unregulated spaces of the private beaches. Early in June, an episode eerily reminiscent of the Bessie Hollister murder occurred when Mrs. Charles F. Lob, on the way home from visiting her sister-in-law, was attacked at midnight by two men as she walked from the Wilson Avenue elevated stop to her home five blocks away. The men choked and chloroformed her, then dragged her into an alley where they raped and robbed her and left her for dead. A passing milkman discovered her the next morning.¹²⁰

Although Mrs. Lob survived the attack, like the Hollister episode it occurred within the context of a string of similar crimes that residents blamed on “the beach hangers-on, attendants of the dance halls in the neighborhood, and young rowdies who loaf about the Wilson avenue ‘L’ station.”¹²¹ As soon as word of the attack began filtering through the community, the North Shore Improvement Association called a mass meeting at North Shore Congregational Church. One of the main targets of their outrage was Tom Chamales’ saloon and beer garden at the corner of Lawrence and Evanston Avenues.¹²² With his brother George, Tom Chamales owned the popular Savoy Café in the Loop, but in 1910 the brothers looked to the north shore residence districts to expand their entertainment interests. That these ethnic businessmen saw financial promise in

¹²⁰ “Choke, Drug, Rob Woman in Street Stirs North Side,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 10, 1911, 1.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Tom Chamales took over the lease of the old Pop Morse’s roadhouse at the corner of Lawrence and Evanston, which since the 1880’s had been both a neighborhood gathering place and a stopping-off place for mourners headed back to the city from St. Boniface cemetery. After 1907, it also became popular with actors at the new Essanay movie studios a few blocks north. Now, Chamales hoped to transform the place into a high-class cabaret, with plans to tear down the roadhouse and build an elegant building with an outdoor garden, dancing, and entertainment. This new café would be called The Green Mill Gardens; it is still in business today.

quiet residential neighborhoods says much about changes taking place as a result of the elevated train extensions. But neighboring residents saw nothing but nuisance in the new establishments, complaining that the Chamales brothers attracted “a disreputable element.”¹²³ The conduct of the “disreputable element” sunk to a new low when bathers at Wilson beach were sighted performing what “can best be described as the ‘aquatic grizzly bear.’”¹²⁴ Appalled critics viewed this “provocative, bodies-rubbing-together...dance” with horror.¹²⁵ The Chicago police had banned the Grizzly Bear after its introduction in tenderloin dance halls the winter before; now, these tenderloin dancers publicly performed the scandalous dance wearing only bathing suits, in broad daylight! Most shocking of all to moralists, instead of breaking up the dancers the beach guards joined the applauding crowd.

The Sunday before the mass meeting at North Shore Congregational a number of north shore ministers inveighed against the shocking displays of behavior in the community, the direct result, they concluded, of “the invasion of that district by rowdies from other less favored neighborhoods in the city.”¹²⁶ With florid rhetoric, Reverend Ingram Bill, the pastor of the North Shore Baptist church, painted a picture of Satan

¹²³ “Three Men Shot on North Shore,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 11, 1911, 1.

¹²⁴ “Pastors Assail Beach Rowdies,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 12 1911, 3. The Grizzly Bear was one of a variety of new “animal dances” inspired by ragtime music and African American culture, along with the Turkey Trot, the Monkey Glide, the Kangaroo Dip, the Chicken Scratch, and the Bunny Hug. The dance was “an imitation of a dancing bear, in which the dancers would take clumsy, heavy steps to the side on toes while making an ungraceful bend at the knees. The couple, facing each other, hugging so that their chests met and their arms flopped over each other’s shoulders, would move forward and backward in this ungainly manner.” Julie Malnig, ed., *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 61.

¹²⁵ Alfred Appel, *Jazz Modernism: From Ellington and Armstrong to Matisse and Joyce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 42.

¹²⁶ “Pastors Assail Beach Rowdies,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 12 1911, 3.

himself threatening the community by violating its homes and the women who symbolized their preservation:

How long will the trail of the beast leave its slime upon beautiful Sheridan Park?...The spoilers have dared to lay their unhallowed hands upon the community. The thug and the assassin are rampant, and the lawless have assailed our homes. The recent outrages which have startled the soul of the community, because of the violent disregard of the sacred spirit of womanhood which the chivalry of all ages has persistently protected, is the daring expression of an evil genius which from time to time with more or less brutality has shocked the moral sense of the people.

Rev. Bill blamed the beaches. He declared, “The crowding of large numbers of people into a circumscribed space, the almost unrestrained spirit of disorder, the night carousing of the visitors who come here by day to the bathing beaches and stay till the saloons close—these elements, no doubt, are largely if not wholly responsible for the crimes which have occurred here.” At North Shore Congregational, Reverend Ainslie spoke in more measured tones, but blamed the same culprits when he announced: “There is no doubt about it the Wilson avenue beach and the saloons over on Lawrence and Evanston avenues have retarded and menaced the development of the north shore in this neighborhood.” Ainslie focused on the issue of community development and stability, declaring, “I am a property owner myself, and I know that values of real estate have been kept back because of the invasion of rowdies. I know several families who have moved out because they could not stand the beach rowdies.” Both ministers appealed to their congregations “to help clean up the evil element” in the community by working to close the beaches.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Ibid.

The mass meeting at North Shore Congregational Church occurred on the evening of June 12, three days after the attack on Mrs. Lob. More than 1,000 people packed in to hear Reverends James S. Ainslie, Herbert Gwyn, Ingram Bill, Henry Hepburn of Buena Memorial, and J.O. Randall of Sheridan Road Methodist. The *Tribune* reported:

The big church was crowded to the doors and many who came to lend their moral support to the agitation against the reign of vice and lawlessness in what has heretofore been known as one of the cleanest residence sections of the city stood up throughout the meeting and applauded the attacks made by the speakers on the privately managed bathing beach, the saloons, and gambling places.

Complaints flew against the “immoral flats...[that] exist in increasing numbers.” The behavior of women also came under comment: “Witnesses have seen women come and go from the saloons as late as 4 o’clock in the morning.” An attendee claimed that he possessed actual photographs of people doing “the aquatic grizzly bear” at Wilson Beach.¹²⁸ J.M. Mack, the president of the North Shore Improvement Association blamed the police: “They have made it a point to see that every kind of indecency is allowed to flourish.”¹²⁹ Attendees at the meeting agreed that privately conducted beaches were the root of the community’s problems, providing “the conditions making possible and inviting such crimes,” and they demanded either the complete abolishment of the beach or a municipal take-over of the space, with the goal of running the beach in a manner more conducive to morals.¹³⁰

Once again, the meeting resulted in the appointment of a Committee of Fifty to call on the mayor, now Carter Harrison, and demand the revocation of the Wilson avenue

¹²⁸ “Attack License of Wilson Beach,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1911, 3.

¹²⁹ “Want Bathing Beach License Taken Away,” *Chicago Record-Herald*, June 13, 1911, 3.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

beach license, greater police protection for the north shore, and special surveillance of Tom Chamales' saloon. When the North Shore committee finally met with Mayor Harrison on June 20, members of the committee handed over the sworn statements of north shore residents about these conditions in their community, some of which were "too vile to be made public." Reverend Ainslie informed the mayor: "The other night on my way home I passed Chamales' resort....I noticed that two women came out of the side door and exercised all their cleverness in the art of smiling to attract my attention. Conditions in the neighborhood are positively shameful." Another man testified that "[o]n the afternoon of Aug. 19, 1910, three girls appeared on the sand at the Wilson avenue beach absolutely nude. A policeman was called and all he did was to drive the girls into the water."¹³¹ After hearing such testimonies, Mayor Harrison decided to close the private beaches at 9:30 pm. Within days, an increased police presence quieted the district, both at the beach and around the saloons at Lawrence and Evanston, and citizen outrage subsided.

An incident that took place within days of the crackdown on beaches and saloons illustrates that the churches were perceived to have been the backers and vivifying spirits behind the protests. Multiple witnesses reported seeing "suspicious looking characters" hovering around both Buena Memorial and Sheridan Road Methodist. At Buena Memorial, a man asked the janitor what time the evening service was, then asked the way to the nearest Baptist church. He then followed the janitor into the basement of the church, attempting to remain when the janitor left. Soon after, as the evening service was in full swing, members of the congregation smelled smoke. Ushers conducted a thorough

¹³¹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, "Mayor Promises to Control Vice," June 21, 1911, 9.

search of the church and discovered chemical-soaked rags burning in the basement. The ushers rushed out of the church to warn members of Sheridan Road Methodist and North Shore Congregational, and, reaching North Shore Congregational, were met with reports of a man of the same description—“about 20 years old of slight build and shabbily dressed”—prowling around the basement there as well.¹³² Church-goers immediately suspected that the plotting of saloon owners lay behind the arson attempt.

The attempt to set fire to Buena Memorial and, apparently, at least to North Shore Congregational and Sheridan Road Methodist as well, if not also North Shore Baptist, is an illuminating coda to the beach wars. Whether put up to the task by saloon owners or not, a young man of just the rowdy, thuggish type that the protesters had been disparaging mounted a physical attack on the stronghold of the self-appointed decency police. In attempting to burn down the church, the arsonist reversed the battle over moral geography; it was as though by erasing the physical symbol of the conservative moralists, he could erase their point of view both from the landscape and from the discourse over morals. By exactly the same mindset, the moralists—in attempting to abolish the beaches and close the saloons—had endeavored to clear the landscape of the physical symbols and breeding grounds for vice, immorality, and indecent behaviors.

In the middle of this acrimonious conflict between churches and the entertainment entrepreneurs lay the very real needs of poor and working class people in the city. During hot weather, before the advent of air-conditioning, this class of citizens had few places to go to cool down. On one 98-degree day in July, 1911, seven people died, and the city hall

¹³² “Fire at Church Crusade Result?” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 27, 1911, 4.

issued twenty two permits to bury babies.¹³³ For this reason, the beaches had their defenders, who, like baseball manager Billy Niesen, based their arguments on democratic ideals. In a letter to the editor on July 13, 1911, north shore resident John Williams wrote, “It is true that on Saturdays and Sundays thousands come there from the more congested districts of the city.” “But,” he asked, “should they be prevented from coming?” Williams protested the closing of the beaches at 9:30, on behalf of the working people who used it: “The majority of young men and women do not reach their homes until nearly seven o’clock in the evening, after a hot day in the city...Let us hope...that we will see every poor soul in this city compelled to live in the less attractive portions of the city come to the water front and refresh himself.”¹³⁴ Such arguments strengthened the city-wide push for more municipally run beaches.

The beach war on the north shore ended up as a partial victory for the conservatives. Wilson Beach responded to criticisms of the aquatic Grizzly Bear by erecting a “sex fence” to segregate male and female bathers both on the beach and in the water.¹³⁵ Female police officers patrolled the beaches, and men could be fined \$20 for flirting with female patrons.¹³⁶ Within a year, planning began for a municipal bathing beach north of Wilson Beach. At the municipal beach, even stricter rules would be in place to uphold the standards of behavior demanded by anti-beach protesters: police

¹³³ “Heat Kills Seven; Four Men Drown; Relief in Doubt,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 3, 1911, 1.

¹³⁴ “Voice of the People,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 13, 1911, 8.

¹³⁵ “Mermaids Open Summer in Lake; Two Men Dead,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 12, 1915, 13.

¹³⁶ “\$20 for Annoying Women,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 18, 1915, 5.

patrols, banning of alcoholic beverages, enforced dress codes, and the segregation of men and women both in locker rooms and on the beach.¹³⁷

Yet as soon as Clarendon Municipal Beach opened in 1915, subtle signs demonstrated the relaxation of the strict codes of behavior and decency that had prompted the protests of 1911. That year, bathing stockings ceased to be mandatory for women at beaches up and down the lakeshore and the “sex fence” at Wilson Beach extended only across the beach, allowing male and female bathers to mingle in the water.¹³⁸ Bathers continued to challenge regulations as well; on one day in 1917, one hundred women were ejected from Clarendon Beach, as well as eight women and five men from Wilson and North Shore beaches, “for appearing in costumes somewhat too frolicsome.”¹³⁹ The activism of churches slowed the appearance of more permissive behaviors on north shore beaches, but it did not squelch them completely.

Conclusion - The Dawn of Uptown

Between 1905 and 1920, the place identity of the north shore suburban neighborhoods underwent a radical transformation. In 1905, church-goers still had confidence that the moral geography of their communities was securely anchored in the values of traditional evangelical Protestantism. For a time it seemed as though control

¹³⁷ “Uptown Beaches,” *Jazz Age Chicago*, http://chicago.urban-history.org/sites/parks/c_beach0.htm. Accessed July 23, 2009.

¹³⁸ “Hundreds Go In Without ‘Em, So Censor Is Mum,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 9, 1915, 3.

¹³⁹ “Dr. Nance Saves a Girl Bather; Beaches Jammed,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 16, 1917, p. 9; the dress code for the municipal beach prohibited white or flesh colored suits and suits that exposed the chest lower than the line on level with the bather’s arm pits. “Uptown Beaches,” *Jazz Age Chicago*, http://chicago.urban-history.org/sites/parks/c_beach0.htm. Accessed July 23, 2009.

over the new urban spaces of the modern city was still up in the air, and churches used a variety of means to defend the moral geography of the residential district from the onslaught of crime and commercial amusements. In Ravenswood, churches enjoyed a degree of success in maintaining their “moral peninsula,” with a strong sense of place galvanizing even Catholics to mobilize according to a shared moral worldview. It retained its domestic identity, in part because the influence of churches created a more powerful role for Ravenswood’s women in the determination of the community’s trajectory. Along the lakeshore, however, the demands of the marketplace would not be halted by moral arguments. By the conclusion of the beach wars of 1911, the Wilson Avenue district had slipped away from the control of the churches and homeowners, with even municipal regulation failing to guarantee its moral geography.

The landscape of the north shore and the population within it were changing. Reverend Ainslie later recalled, “By 1912 and 1913 cheaper apartment houses were being built everywhere and many of the desirable people moved farther north.”¹⁴⁰ In an economy that provided more attractive employment options than domestic service to many young women, large homes could no longer be maintained; by 1915, apartment buildings constituted the leading form of construction in the district. Apartments got smaller and smaller, with the one-room apartment debuting in the Wilson Avenue district in 1916.¹⁴¹ Families gave way to single people and young married couples, who came to the district for excitement and liberation from the constraints of the middle-class, Protestant cultural hegemony.

¹⁴⁰ Palmer, Uptown I, Doc. 52, 2.

¹⁴¹ Hoyt, 230-231, as reported in *The Economist*, April 1, 1916.

By the tens of thousands, these new residents thronged to the beaches and the entertainment venues. One resident recalled that “[e]very hot night and every Saturday and Sunday afternoon meant crowds of people swarm the ‘L’ at Wilson and Broadway to the rickety old bathhouses which stretched for half a block north of Wilson Avenue at the Lake. It was not so much a place to take one’s family as a place to take one’s date.”¹⁴² Soon, the *Chicago Daily News* reported, “The beaches...proved inadequate to meet the amusement demands of a city that was just learning to play. Movie theaters, ballrooms, billiard halls, bowling alleys, and other forms of amusement were provided.”¹⁴³ The famous Edgewater Beach Hotel was constructed on the lakeshore in 1916 and by 1920 the district boasted eleven movie palaces with seating for 19,965 people and thirty-six hotels. Lots that sold for \$75 in 1907 sold for between \$900 and \$2,500 fifteen years later.¹⁴⁴ Even the name of the community changed. When Loren Miller publicized his newly opened department store at Lawrence and Evanston Avenues as “the Uptown Store” in 1915, the word “Uptown” replaced Sheridan Park in common parlance.¹⁴⁵ Never again would an observer mistake this part of the north shore for a suburb. Instead, by the late nineteen-teens an exit from the train at Wilson Avenue found one “in the midst of the most ultra-modern and challenging, the most ominous or the most hopeful—

¹⁴² Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 54, 2.

¹⁴³ “Wilson Avenue Area Ranks Next to Loop,” *Chicago Daily News*, May 19, 1923, 12.

¹⁴⁴ “Thriving Era Dawns For Wilson Avenue,” *Chicago Daily News*, February 18, 1922, 13.

¹⁴⁵ “Uptown Was Only a Subdivision 37 Years Ago,” *Unknown*, February 6, 1931, 1. Photocopy received from Angela Schlater. This informal appellation became formalized in 1921, when local businessmen decided to call the district Uptown.

according to your point of view—but at any rate the most prophetic section of Chicago.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Edwin Balmer, *The Breath of Scandal* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1922), 199.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
“LET US RISE UP AND BUILD” –
THE CITY CHURCH**

*The God of heaven, he will prosper us;
therefore we his servants will arise and build.*

Nehemiah 2:20
The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church Bulletin, 1927

The Reverend Asa Ferry must have spent the morning of June 19, 1927 in a state of anticipation. This day was the culmination all his efforts, the sole reason he had been summoned to Chicago from his pulpit in Philadelphia six long years before. After five years of planning and fund raising, petty frustrations and setbacks and exhilarating steps forward, the Edgewater Presbyterian Church would finally dedicate its long-awaited New Community House. The preceding week had been filled with an exhausting round of preparatory celebrations: from Opening Day the previous Sunday, through Young People’s Night, Home Folks Night, Neighborhood Night, and the Bible School Receptions. Now, the moment had come for the formal dedication of the building that would assure Edgewater Presbyterian a place in the chaotic bustle of this city neighborhood for decades to come.

The growth of Edgewater Presbyterian had reflected the demographic and economic growth of Edgewater itself, a fact that was in the forefront the congregation

members' minds as they dedicated their New Community House. The Dedication Program explained, "Edgewater Church has endeavored to meet the changing situation through which its community has passed in the last thirty years: Village, Town, and City. At each transition period it has sought to adjust itself to the varying needs of its constituency. It feels that the present building is the first step toward an adequate facing of its City Task."¹ Ferry had come to Chicago to lead Edgewater Presbyterian in adapting to the changing demands of its community; he was not alone in this endeavor. Facing the "City Task" became the mission of all north shore church leaders in the nineteen teens and twenties and it is the recurring theme of church experience during this period.

Members of north shore churches had engaged in public battles to ward off the incursion of commercial amusements and more permissive lifestyles, but the anti-beach crusade proved to be the last concerted effort made by the churches to purify the moral geography. By 1915, even the most obdurate opponents of the new mass culture came to realize the inexorable nature of the changes that had taken hold of the north shore. During the second decade of the twentieth century, the communities that made up the newly christened "Uptown" district completed the physical transition from suburbs to city neighborhoods, complete with high-rise apartment buildings and thriving, electric-lit commercial thoroughfares. Away from the lake, Ravenswood remained primarily residential, but it too experienced the physical transition from single-family homes to three-flats and large apartment buildings. Such physical changes prompted demographic shifts; as longstanding homeowners fled to more bucolic locales like the "North Shore"

¹ 1927 *Dedication Program*, 12, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records, Edgewater Presbyterian Church.

suburbs north of Evanston, they were replaced exponentially by young apartment dwellers, eager to taste the modern urban experience. The task of attracting these apartment-dwelling newcomers—in the midst of the myriad of social opportunities that awaited them in Uptown—molded the pragmatic realities of many north shore churches.

During the period between 1915 and 1925, congregations in Uptown, Edgewater, and Ravenswood utilized a variety of strategies to anchor the church in city life and project it more firmly into public space. The most radical changes to the religious landscape came in the form of ambitious building programs. The physical structure of church plants changed as churches erected larger sanctuaries to accommodate the amplified scale of the urban landscape, as well as modern “community houses” that expressed a new conception of the church’s role and responsibilities in the city. Underlying these physical responses to the exigencies of the urban environment was a reverberating awareness that churches themselves had to change if they were to remain relevant to the ebbs and flows of city life and, by extension, to the modern world itself.

The City Church

Through the end of the nineteenth century, American Protestants commonly viewed the city as antithetical to the aims and values of religion. They portrayed the city as an alien other, into which the respectable religionist ventured only to save souls and at the risk of his or her own virtue. Yet by the first decade of the twentieth century, these fundamental assumptions about urban reality and virtue had come more and more under attack in the lens of popular culture and youth culture. Furthermore, it became increasingly clear that the future of American civilization lay in its most powerful cities.

As a result, many prominent mainline Protestants turned their attention to the role of the church in the city, with a new emphasis on preparing for the future.

These critics interrogated the relationship of the urban church to the community that surrounded it. In commuter villages like Ravenswood and homogeneous suburbs like Edgewater, whether the church was the center of social life or one important element in a constellation of other attachments defining personal identity, the place of the church had been understood. Now, the complexities of the modern city rendered its position more ambiguous. Amid a cacophony of influences, such as rising commercialism and ever-increasing cultural pluralism, traditional American Protestant understandings of the role of the church in the community no longer applied. Many observers feared that the church was losing significance in the busy round of city dwellers' lives. A 1913 article by Winston Paul entitled "The City and the Church" posed the fundamental question: "Religion is a part of life. The church claims to be a living and vital institution; as such, it must be judged by the same standards as other branches of human activity. The church is in the city, but in how far is it a part of the life of the city?" The author presented a new "efficiency test" for churches: "What difference does the presence of this church make in this community?"²

In urban churches situated near poverty-ridden districts of the city, some congregations, influenced by Social Gospel theology, had already answered this question through the development of institutional churches. Institutional churches reacted against the tendency of Protestant churches to follow their affluent members to comfortable

² Winston Paul, "The City and the Church," *The American City*, Vol. IX, Number 2 (Aug. 1913): 212.

residential enclaves or to the suburbs, electing instead to pursue an aggressive commitment to alleviating the needs of the poor.³ In his 1899 primer on the theology of the institutional church, Edward Judson defined it as follows:

An Institutional Church...is an organized body of Christian believers, who, finding themselves in a hard and uncongenial social environment, supplement the ordinary methods of the Gospel—such as preaching, prayer-meetings, Sunday-school, and pastoral visitation—by a system of organized kindness, a congeries of institutions, which, by touching people on physical, social, and intellectual sides, will conciliate and draw them within the reach of the Gospel.⁴

Institutional churches cultivated a sense of social responsibility among their members and, in the manner of settlement houses, remained open day and night to offer kindergartens, industrial schools, employment bureaus, health clinics, visiting nurses, circulating libraries, gymnasiums, and classes and clubs for tenement dwellers. By 1906, Chicago claimed twenty-five institutional churches.⁵

But urban churches that did not revolve around a charitable agenda experienced a crisis of purpose in the nineteen-teens. By then, the expansion of urban boundaries and

³ The institutional church movement emerged on both sides of the Atlantic—in England and in the United States—at the end of the nineteenth century, with many of the same influences as that of the settlement house movement. Both of them may be seen as outgrowths of Social Gospel theology, “a movement to apply the gospel to all the needs and activities of life,” including social conditions. Harry Frederick Ward, *A Year Book of the Church and Social Service in the United States* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), 20. For background on the emergence of social criticism and social action in the American Protestant denominations, see Henry May’s classic *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 89-160; Paul Phillip’s comparative study of Social Christianity in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); and Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

⁴ Edward Judson, *The Institutional Church: A Primer in Pastoral Theology* (New York: Lentilhon & Company, 1899), 30-31.

⁵ Such churches were not without their own problems. In 1907, Walter Rauschenbusch observed that institutional work “puts a terrible burden on the church. Institutional work is hard work and costly work. It requires a large plant and an expensive staff. It puts such a strain on the organizing ability and the sympathies of the workers that few can stand it long.” Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1907), 304.

transportation networks meant that many churches served parts of the city that were geographically removed from the immediate concerns of tenement-dwellers.

Furthermore, many Protestants who feared for the future of Christianity in the city were not as influenced by the Social Gospel as the institutional church movement had been; they located the diminishing clout of Protestant Christianity in a laxity of commitment to religion among in the middle classes rather than in the degraded situation of the poor.

Churches in former suburbs, which already had faced criticism for their lack of integration in the wider community, faced the challenge of how to deepen their ties to a social and physical environment that had completely transformed in a matter of decades.

Many of these churches found a purpose in the “city church” movement. Ralph Janis notes that “[a]fter the turn of the century, books with titles like ‘The Downtown Church,’ ‘The Suburban Trend,’ ‘The Church in the Changing City,’ and ‘The Strategy of City Church Planning’ indicated the range of adaptations which a city church might make to renew or preserve its vitality.”⁶ Writers of Protestant prescriptive literature had begun to echo the claims of urban clergy that churches in America’s large cities faced issues that differed radically from those confronted by rural and suburban churches:

Now the churches are realizing that modern economic conditions, the specialization of industry, the division of labor, the shorter working day, the new and, in some respects, disorganized home conditions, have produced radical social changes in which the churches have been either largely eliminated or disregarded. To meet these conditions the church must become an active factor in the social life of the community.⁷

⁶ Ralph Janis, *Church and City in Transition: The Social Composition of Religious Groups in Detroit, 1880-1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 168.

⁷ Walter Scott Ahearn, *The Malden Survey: A Report on the Church Plants of a Typical City, Showing the Use of the Interchurch World Movement Score Card and Standards for Rating City Church Plants* (New York: Interchurch World Movement of North America, 1920), 7.

Such activity in the community, urban Protestant leaders argued, demanded a separate classification from other church work. The “city church” would be marked by social involvement.⁸ Like the institutional church, the city church was open throughout the week; unlike the institutional church, it catered primarily to its own congregation. The city church nurtured its members spiritually, physically, and socially. Rather than simply presenting negative criticism of commercial amusements and urban vice, it presented recreational and social alternatives for people of all ages. Youth and their place in the church played a particular role in the mission of the city church. The city church would provide incentive for young people to weave their social lives more integrally into their spiritual lives.

Supporting this new conception of the city church was the conviction that Christianity ought to break free of its church cloister and enter into the secular sphere. In his study of the future prospects of American Protestantism, William Adams Brown wrote, “If a man’s Christianity means anything, it should be as apparent in his life during the week as in his conduct on Sunday. The church as the social expression of the Christian religion may be expected to illustrate this fact in its organizational life.”⁹ In early commuter villages like Ravenswood, the church had been the center of community activity seven days a week, but the proliferation of competing secular institutions in the city had decreased the involvement of the church in daily life. Critics of Protestant complacency now called for a return to church involvement in all aspects of their

⁸ For a contemporary view of the perceived role and duties of the city church, see Arcadius McSwain Trawick, *The City Church and Its Social Mission: A Series of Studies in the Social Extension of the City Church* (New York: Association Press, 1913).

⁹ William Adams Brown, *The Church in America: A Study of the Present Condition and Future Prospects of American Protestantism* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922), 202.

members' lives. As Brown noted, "It is now recognized that only by becoming an active participant in the social life of the people can [a church] hope to modify that social life, to motivate it with Christian ideals. In order to make this active participation possible the church plant must offer more than an opportunity for a weekly sermon."¹⁰

The logical outgrowth of these theories about the city church called for not only a reconsideration of church mission, but a radical rethinking of religious space. The church structure could no longer afford to be separate from the secular life and landscape of the city. Instead, church buildings needed to make a statement, projecting a confident external face into the public sphere and providing space enough within to accommodate the host of activities that would now fall under the church's purview. The theology of the city church shaped the mission, but the real work of the city church would take place in physical space.

Uptown: The Bright Light District

In the face of increasing competition for the hearts, minds, and dollars of city dwellers, the question of religion's relevance to urban life had increasingly vital significance throughout the far north side neighborhoods that came to comprise Uptown. In Buena Park, Sheridan Park, and Edgewater, dramatic changes to the physical and social landscape abounded. As single-family zoning restrictions expired in the early residential developments, the razing of single-family houses for high rise apartment buildings became a money-making bonanza for speculators; profits of \$25,000 or \$50,000 could be made on a single apartment building, with the entire cost of the

¹⁰ Athearn, 7.

building borrowed by the developer.¹¹ The quiet side streets along the lake that had been lined with spacious homes and wide yards quickly gave way to ten- and twelve-story apartment buildings, while on main streets the parade of single family residences was replaced by a thriving and expanding commercial presence. By 1920 only small patches of single family homes remained in Uptown, and further west even the tenor of residential Ravenswood changed, with many single family homes giving way to flats and large apartment buildings. Church buildings designed to conform to a suburban, residential milieu began to seem antiquated on a landscape that almost completely turned over in only ten years.

From the earliest years of the lakeside suburbs, genteel mansions lined the lakeshore along Sheridan Road, punctuated at intervals with prominent churches on visible corner lots. These remnants of the old physical landscape soon became an impediment to commercial expansion; in 1914 one resident noted, “there isn’t a property owner between Byron and Foster Avenue on Sheridan Road, who has not been approached and made an offer, with object in view of converting his property from residential to business.”¹² In 1915, rumors spread that both North Shore Congregational and Sheridan Road Methodist would relocate from their prime corner lots on Sheridan,

¹¹ In Edgewater, Cochran’s original restrictions on the construction of multi-family homes were set to expire after twenty years. In 1927, a real estate agent acknowledged that the restrictions fell like dominoes after Cochran’s death in 1923: “This restriction began to seem undesirable before Mr. Cochran died, but none were removed until his heirs took the step after his death. The restriction has only been removed in cases where the character of the district had already changed from single dwellings into apartments. Some of the have run out by now and the houses have gone into apartments. Others will expire in the next year or two and the undoubtedly the section will go into apartments and hotels.” Palmer, I, doc. 15, 3.

¹² Palmer, Uptown I, Doc. 56, 4. Changes in the economy and in gender roles had rendered the old mansions in Buena Park, Sheridan Park, and Edgewater—which required a large retinue of servants and constant supervision—obsolete. Instead, even wealthy buyers favored a new residential ideal, the full-service apartment building.



Figure 37. The intersection of Sheridan Road and Wilson Avenue, looking north, 1923. Tower of North Shore Congregational Church visible at left. Library of Congress.

from buildings that were respectively only seven and five years old. The Reverend A.D. Thibodeau of the Methodist church claimed to have received offers of more than \$50,000 for the church lot at Montrose and Sheridan and he seriously considered the prospect of merging his congregation with that of Epworth Methodist church in Edgewater. Thibodeau noted that “[i]nstead of taking the money and building again on some lot off the boulevard, we believe it is a wiser plan to take the money and combine with the Epworth church...and build a fine, new church, which will house the two congregations.”¹³ Ultimately, the Sheridan Road-Epworth merger did not materialize, but within two years Sheridan Road Methodist had sold its Sheridan Road property, moved a few blocks off the main street, and erected a new \$60,000 structure.¹⁴ Offers for church lots only escalated after 1915; in 1923, real estate agents offered North Shore

¹³ W.B. Norton, “Another Church Likely to Close on North Side,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 10, 1915, 15.

¹⁴ W.B. Norton, “New Methodist Church to be Dedicated Today,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1918, C10.

Congregational as much as \$800,000 for its corner lot at Wilson and Sheridan, a lot for which, in 1901, the church had paid \$14,500.

The commercialization of Sheridan Road occurred in conjunction with a shift in the moral geography of the north side's commercial avenues. Robert Orsi observes, "[a]mbiguity and ambivalence reigned in cities...city life undermined moral certainty."¹⁵ Such had been the conviction of the anti-beach crusaders, and, as they feared, the reputation of the Wilson Avenue District deteriorated with the proliferation of smoky dives and disreputable flats. A reporter from the *Chicago Daily News* noted that Wilson Avenue had "become known as one of the city's most immoral districts, as home of more 'dead beats' and 'four flushers' than any other part of Chicago...The popular conception of the Wilson avenue district is that it is a section where easy morals prevail, where everybody lives beyond his income and dodges bill collectors; where merchants pay exorbitant rentals and either starve or go broke."¹⁶



Figure 38. Wilson Avenue, looking east to Sheridan Road, 1924. From *Chicago: City of Neighborhoods*.

¹⁵ Robert Orsi, *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 31.

¹⁶ "Wilson Avenue Area Ranks Next to Loop," *Chicago Daily News*, May 19, 1923, p. 12. The transformation and notoriety of Wilson Avenue found its way into popular culture. In her 1920 short story "The Home Girl," novelist Edna Ferber wrote, "If you know your Chicago...you are aware that, long ago, Wilson Avenue proper crept slyly around the corner and achieved a clandestine alliance with big glittering Sheridan Road; which escapade changed the demure thoroughfare into Wilson improper." In Edna Ferber, *Gigolo* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1922), 94.

The moral decline of Wilson Avenue prompted the commercial ascendance of Lawrence Avenue a half mile north, where real estate values skyrocketed. As a result of competition between such newly expanded branch outlets as drug stores, cigar stores, and banks, store rents along Lawrence increased 1,000% between 1915 and 1928.¹⁷ According to Homer Hoyt, “Lawrence Avenue ran through the center of zones of maximum population increase, and the rise in land values for the entire length of [this street] probably exceeded that of any other [street] in the city.”¹⁸ Transfer corners where streetcar lines crossed the elevated train or another streetcar line, such as those at Lawrence and Broadway and Lawrence and Sheridan, produced peak land values. While Lawrence Avenue saw the most dramatic increase, all across the north side the

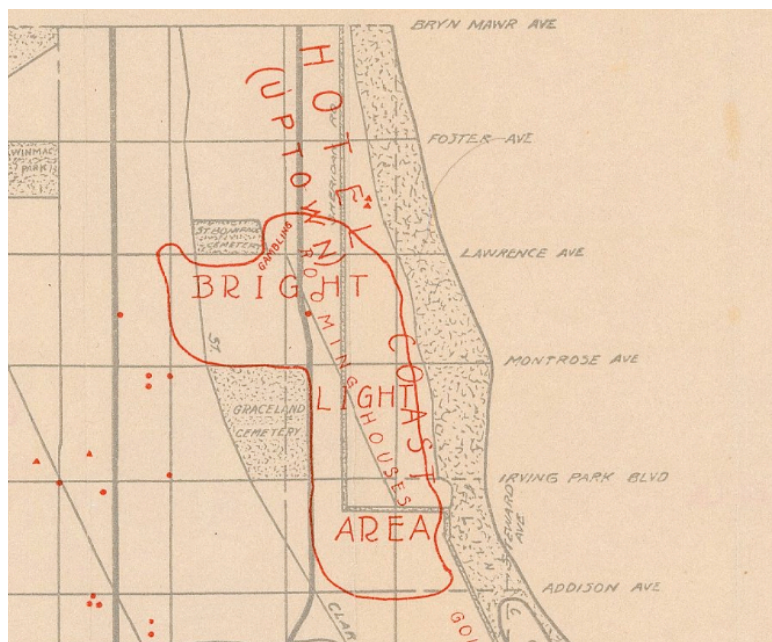


Figure 39. Detail of a 1923 University of Chicago map designating Uptown a “Bright Light Area,” a rooming house district, and part of the “Hotel Coast.” University of Chicago Library.

¹⁷ Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago: The Relationship of the Growth of Chicago to the Rise in its Land Values, 1830-1933* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933), 250.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 250-51.

appreciation of real estate values accelerated with no end in sight. By the middle teens, developers razed buildings only ten or twenty years old to erect taller, larger buildings in their places. One local businessman predicted, “The day of the three-story building in this district is passed....From this time on you will see tall apartments, or hotels go up, with a few residences.”¹⁹

The confluence of mass transit lines along Wilson and Lawrence constituted the primary engine driving rising real estate values, but another force was also in the ascendance: the automobile. In the first decade of the twentieth century, wealthy residents of Edgewater, Buena Park, and Sheridan Park had pioneered the use of this luxury item, but two decades later car ownership was widespread. In 1923, the *Chicago Daily News* reported, “The growing vogue of the automobile made Sheridan road one of the city’s most congested avenues of traffic instead of the fine residence street it once had been. The twenty-four hour din of heavy automobile traffic, the perpetual poison gas attack from the motor exhausts combined to make Sheridan road less attractive than it had been.”²⁰ The constant automobile traffic also made the streets far more dangerous for pedestrians unaccustomed to watching for erratic driving. Throughout the teens and twenties, local newspapers recorded scores of automobile accidents involving pedestrians, many of them fatal. As early as 1911, North Shore Congregational’s Reverend James Ainslie led a “war on speeders” after a sixteen year old member of his congregation was struck and killed, making her the fifth neighborhood fatality in six

¹⁹ “Wilson-Broadway District Now Big City,” *Chicago Commerce*, July 3, 1920.

²⁰ “Wilson Avenue Area Ranks Next to Loop,” *Chicago Daily News*, May 19, 1923, 12. From 1920 to 1930, auto ownership in Chicago increased 400%. Hoyt, 237.

months.²¹ The principal of the Graeme Stewart School in Sheridan Park testified: “On the average one child from my school has been struck by an automobile every two months for the last two years.”²² By 1926, a glance at the front page of the local *North Side Citizen* found mention of between three and six auto accidents involving pedestrians per week.

In churches organized for and acclimated to the slower pace of late-nineteenth century suburban life, such drastic changes in landscape and environment made this period in congregational life a difficult one. Families that had previously formed the backbone of church activities found the new atmosphere inhospitable. From Edgewater’s Epworth Methodist, “[t]he Pruitts and Slocums moved to Evanston, the Klines to Kenilworth, the Baldwins to Wilmette, the Beachells to Kenosha.” Like other neighboring churches, “Epworth was obliged to adjust itself to new conditions and to serve a constantly changing apartment house population instead of a community of home owners.”²³

The more settled, home-owning residents who chose to remain in Uptown and Edgewater viewed the apartment dwellers with suspicion and distrust. In 1910, the Edgewater Improvement Association groused that “apartment buildings have been the ruin of most neighborhoods in this city because their occupants have allowed themselves to be influenced by the narrow-minded and un-American among them who are forever

²¹ “Leads Church in War on Speeders,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 13, 1911, 3.

²² “Urges Bullets for Speeders,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 15, 1911, 3.

²³ “Thousands Fill Church’s Quiet Prairie of 1890,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 24, 1929, 11.

proclaiming that they ‘don’t do what they don’t have to do.’”²⁴ Edwin Balmer, who grew up in Edgewater in the 1890’s, observed that much of the conflict arose from the fact that the new residents of Uptown and the rest of the lakeshore centered their lives around different values than had their more elite, suburban predecessors: “They built up the modern Wilson Avenue...making it the exaltation, not of the kitchen and the sitting room, but of the inn and the street; not of the sewing room and the meetinghouse, but of the shop and the theater.”²⁵ For many new residents of the north shore, the old community life centered in homes, churches, and private clubs paled in comparison with the more exciting—and anonymous—public life of the city streets.

The Marketplace of the Landscape

Churches did retain significance in the lives of many apartment dwellers, a fact to which the steady membership numbers of the more successful north shore churches attested, but the visual dominance of spaces devoted to the leisure enterprises of shopping and entertainment altered the place identity of Uptown to the extent that in the public mind the district came to be identified primarily with secular pastimes. A resident observed that “[t]he impression one carries away is that of a thriving community grown up like a mushroom and catering essentially to the lighter desires of man – clothes, amusements, etc.”²⁶ Church structures, previously among the most arresting buildings on the streetscape, were subsumed to more flamboyant facades in a hierarchy of spectacle.

²⁴ Edgewater Improvement Association *Bulletin*, Dec. 3, 1910, n.p., Chicago Improvement Association Collection, University of Chicago.

²⁵ Balmer, 202.

²⁶ Vivien Palmer Documents, Uptown I, doc. 54, 1.

Lighted signs and opulent store windows grabbed the passer-by's attention and glittering high-rise apartment buildings towered over church steeples and bell towers. Churches now had to compete with "the allure and exuberance of the smart display in the shop windows...the enlivenment of a splendid theater front and the luxuriance of a tea room."²⁷ Such visual competition pushed churches to project a more forceful religious presence into the messy space of the urban marketplace. Often, these efforts took cues from the marketing ethos of the commercial environment.

The proliferation of electricity and advertising signage altered the visual composition of the urban landscape, particularly at night.²⁸ One Uptown resident noted how prevalent these lights seemed: "There are lights on the boulevards and the clustered lights that the city puts up in its uptown business sections. Then there are the electric signs strung all along the business and amusement district. The stores and the windows are all lighted also, so, at night there is almost a white light."²⁹ Churches responded to the parade of lights by installing their own electric symbols and eye-catching signs. The North Shore Baptist Church installed a red neon sign that spelled out "North Shore Baptist" so riders on the El could spot the sign from the platform several blocks away.³⁰

²⁷ Balmer, 203.

²⁸ For electrification as "a new kind of visual text," see David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 60: "This new rhetoric of night space edited the city down to a few idealized essentials. It underlined significant landmarks and literally highlighted important locations....Under a shimmering spotlight or along a Great White Way the commonplace seemed to acquire greater individuality and value. Simultaneously, lighting erased unattractive areas and cast everything into an impenetrable darkness. If by day poor or unsightly sections called out for social reform, by night the city was a purified world of light, simplified into spectacular pattern, interspersed with now-unimportant blanks."

²⁹ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 53, 1.

³⁰ Edgewater Historical Society, *1993 Fall Tour of Homes*, Number 5244, North Shore Baptist Church, <http://www.edgewaterhistory.org/tour930919/index.html?1.html>. Accessed May 7, 2010.

In 1921, Ravenswood Congregational installed a revolving lighted cross atop the steeple of the church, 104 feet above the ground. On the cover of its weekly bulletin, in newspaper advertisements, and any other public arena, Ravenswood Congregational promoted itself as “the Church of the Lighted Cross.” The lighted cross served the same purpose as the flashing lights of the theaters or the gleaming store windows; a



Figure 40. Woodcut depicting the Church of the Lighted Cross. RCC records.

Ravenswood resident later told the church’s pastor that he could see the lighted cross from his bedroom window. According to the pastor, “Each night he watched it before dropping off to sleep. It was always his reminder of a power in his life greater than he, a power in which to place faith and trust, a power of encouragement during some difficult years when he needed all the hope he could muster.”³¹ In the 1920’s, the North Shore Congregational Church, located at Sheridan and Wilson in the middle of the Wilson Avenue commercial district, erected a giant electric sign atop the main tower of the church building that reminded Uptowners, day and night: “Christ Died for Our Sins.”³²



Figure 41. North Shore Congregational Church with the electric sign atop its tower, 1920’s. Berean Bible Society.

³¹ *Annual Yearbook and Directory, 1960-61*, First Congregational Church of Ravenswood, Chicago, 3-4. Assorted Directories, 1929-1965 (2/4), Ravenswood Congregational Church Collection, Sulzer Regional Library.

³² This sign is still visible, on the tower of what is now the Uptown Baptist Church.

If the busy-ness and complexity of the urban environment—electricity, motion, noise—presented one challenge to churches, the very largeness and opulence of new urban landmarks presented another. Banks, department stores, dance halls, and moving picture theaters materialized on the landscape at a scale previously unseen on the north shore. The theaters presented the most conspicuous example of the visual competition that confronted Uptown churches. By the late nineteen teens, moving picture promoters had shifted their focus from immigrant neighborhoods to the neighborhoods of the upwardly mobile and the firmly middle class. In an effort to increase the respectability of movie-going, promoters built substantial, luxurious theaters that far outstripped the cramped, dark rooms in which films had previously been screened for less affluent audiences. They located these high-class theaters on visible sites near well-lit, major thoroughfares. Positioned near train stops for patrons to access near their homes or on the way home from work, moving picture theaters capitalized on eye-catching designs. They also used bright electric lights to distinguish themselves from surrounding buildings and project an aura of fantasy into the city street. In the late teens, theaters referenced French and Italian Renaissance styles; later, stylistic references became even more exotic and looked to India and the Far East. As with amusement parks, the ornate exteriors and interiors of movie theaters advertised a break from a more sedate Victorian past, a freedom from moral rules that were so closely identified with Protestant religion.³³

³³ Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 149, 153-157. See also Steven J. Ross, *Movies and American Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002)

After 1915, movie palaces began appearing all over Uptown.³⁴ The district, rapidly gaining a middle class and upwardly mobile population, was ideal territory for theater promoters. In 1916, the Green Mill's owner Tom Chamales—who had been so vilified by church crusaders during the beach wars of 1911—announced that he would invest \$650,000 in the construction of a large theater at Lawrence and Broadway, across the street from his nightclub. Designed by the esteemed theatrical architecture firm of Rapp and Rapp, the theater included eight retail storefronts, thirty-six apartments, and a 2,500-seat theater.³⁵ The theater's interior was lit throughout and decorated in vibrant colors. The Riviera opened in October 1918, a month after an even larger theater, the Pantheon, opened at the corner of Wilson and Sheridan. The Pantheon, designed by Chicago architect Walter Ahlschlager, contained seats for almost 3,000, and was the largest moving picture house in the city at its opening. One Uptown resident later looked back upon the opening of these two theaters as the true beginning of rapid growth in Uptown: “since that time, the last ten or twelve years, that you find real boom times in Uptown.”³⁶ In their size, opulence, and egalitarian promise, movie theaters like the Riviera and Pantheon were the cathedrals of the new mass culture, promising to break down class divisions and bring about greater individual freedom through consumption.³⁷

³⁴ In Edgewater, the Bryn Mawr Theater, another Rapp and Rapp building, was erected next to the elevated stop in 1912.

³⁵ In order to attract women and demonstrate the respectability of the establishment, the Riviera included a nursing station and a supervised playroom where mothers could leave their children during a movie.

³⁶ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 47, 1.

³⁷ See May, 166.

In response to the visual competition posed by a landscape crowded with massive urban structures faced with colorful terra cotta tiles and covered with fanciful stylistic details, churches embarked on ambitious building programs. Many church leaders held the “conviction that the downtown church should be not only geographically central, but also *important*....[The church structure] should not only be analogous to the banks, theaters, department stores, and so forth; it should be their equal.”³⁸ In neighborhoods like Uptown, churches had a second reason to embark on building programs. As former church members relocated to more classically suburban settings, churches faced competition with one another for new members. Martin Marty observes that during this period “[m]ost people already had firm religious preferences, so the leadership had to invent reasons for people to choose one religious group over another.” As a result, “churches engaged in competitive building programs so that each could put on the best possible face.”³⁹

Both of these factors—dramatic physical changes and stylistic tropes in the secular environment, in addition to a limited pool of potential church-goers—led many Protestant churches to embrace a structural monumentality that had been missing from churches built for a suburban scale. Church leaders realized that only with growth would they hold their own in the urban landscape and they anticipated for increases in church membership by dramatically expanding the size of church plants. Using strategies that mimicked the eye-catching immensity of commercial and entertainment enterprises,

³⁸ James W. Lewis, *The Protestant Experience in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1975: At Home in the City* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 177.

³⁹ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, Vol. 2: The Noise of Conflict, 1919-1941*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 21.

churches “attempted to spiritualize the new urban space,” even as these same secular enterprises commercialized the public sphere.⁴⁰

The Protestant Cathedral

In Uptown, Buena Memorial Presbyterian Church responded to these pressures by erecting a dramatic Neo-Gothic cathedral at the prominent intersection of Sheridan Road and Evanston Avenue, which was renamed Broadway—to evoke Manhattan’s own Uptown bright light district—in 1913. The original Buena Memorial chapel, built in 1905, sat on the odd triangle of land between the two streets that Lucy Waller had left to the church in her will. After the church’s initial canvas for members in its early years, the growth of its congregation had remained modest and for a time the chapel sufficed the church’s needs. When the Reverend Henry Hepburn arrived in 1909, the names of only 170 members graced the church rolls and the Sunday School counted less than one hundred enrolled. But Buena Memorial stood in the center of one of the fastest-growing parts of the north side.

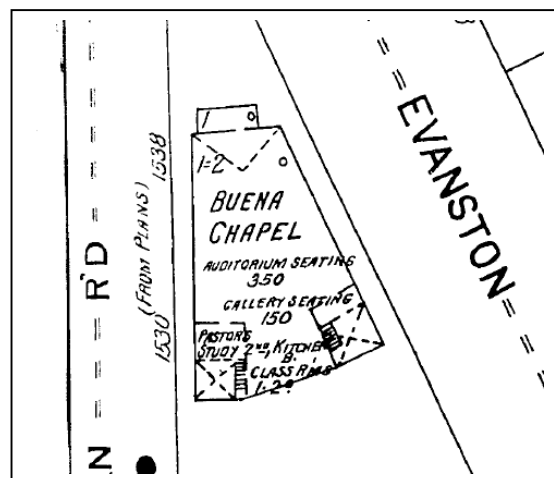


Figure 42. The 1905 Buena Memorial Chapel, situated between Sheridan Road and Evanston Avenue. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1905.

Furthermore, almost immediately, Reverend Hepburn had thrown himself into the public life of Buena Park and Sheridan Park, playing a leading role in the beach wars the summer of 1911. Such public visibility paid off and by 1915 Hepburn had received seven

⁴⁰ Joiner, 224.

hundred new members into the church. Soon, lack of space compelled Sunday School classes to meet in an adjoining house and even on the lawn of the church.

By the nineteen-teens, the old Buena chapel—standing where the two primary north/south arteries of the north shore intersected with Montrose Avenue—occupied a prime site of north side real estate.⁴¹ Exponential congregational growth over the previous decade created a desperate need to expand church facilities, but a conveyance on the deed bequeathed by Mrs. Waller permanently consecrated the triangular lot to strictly orthodox religious uses.⁴² As a result, Buena Memorial remained bound to the original site. Addressing the most pressing needs first, in 1916 the church commenced a seven-year long building program with the construction of a new parish house to accommodate its Sunday School work.⁴³ This English Gothic structure opened the way for even greater church growth, and by 1923, the efforts of Buena's popular and industrious minister had seen the membership of the church multiply nearly tenfold in fourteen years, from 170 to 1,685, with more than 1,700 children and teenagers enrolled in Sunday School.⁴⁴

⁴¹ "Churches Have Children's Day," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 15, 1914, 13.

⁴² The deed stated: "the property hereby conveyed shall always be used exclusively for the worship of God and the building up of his kingdom; that the grantee and its successors shall be continued as a Presbyterian church and that from the pulpit and from every teaching place at any time on said property or any part thereof and by every church society, organization, or body at any time having any control thereof, or any part thereof, the bible shall always be taught and preached in its entirety as the word of God." "Bible Governs Land Title," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 21, 1906, 11.

⁴³ The new fireproof English Gothic parish house, built for \$65,000 and designed by Ivar Vieve-Naess, was an early prototype of the community house building later constructed by Edgewater Presbyterian. The ground floor boasted a large lobby, Sunday school rooms to accommodate 1,800 students, a dining room and kitchen, and modern heating and ventilating systems. On the main floor was a large assembly hall with gallery, the pastor's study, a church parlor, a large gymnasium with visitors gallery, locker rooms, and showers.

⁴⁴ Rev. W.B. Norton, "News of the Religious World," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 18, 1923, E14.

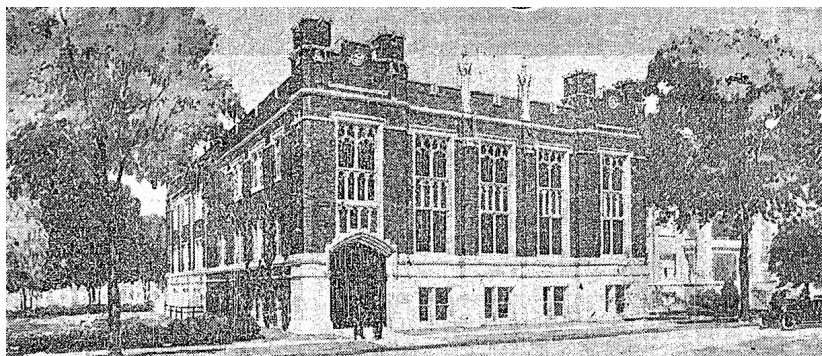


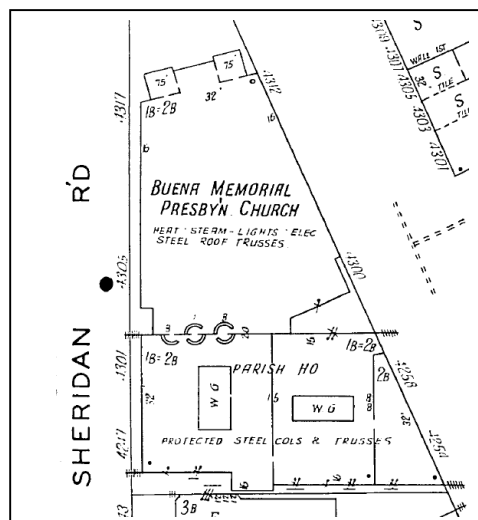
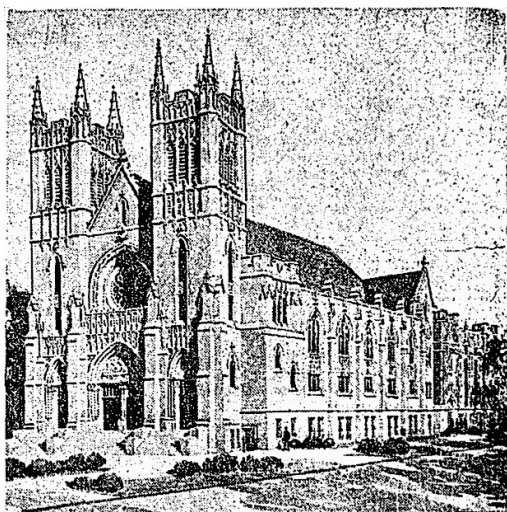
Figure 43. Buena Memorial's 1916 parish house, in the English Gothic style. Chicago Daily Tribune.

During the planning of the 1916 parish house, church leaders reserved the north part of the lot, which commanded axial views from six directions, for the main church edifice.⁴⁵ Ivar Viehe-Naess, a Norwegian American who also designed Buena's parish house, received the commission for the new church. Viehe-Naess had worked for Daniel Burnham's architecture firm from 1900 to 1912, attaining the rank of chief draftsman in 1906. After starting his own practice in 1913, he consistently designed banks, office buildings, churches, hospitals, and other institutional buildings in the Neo-Gothic style.⁴⁶ Viehe-Ness himself belonged to Unity Lutheran church in west Edgewater, for whom he had designed a modest English Gothic structure in 1917. Such experience made Viehe-Ness attractive to a congregation that hoped to project its confidence, status, and permanence onto the rapidly changing environment of Uptown.

After the demolition of the old chapel, the laying of the cornerstone took place on June 18, 1922, and construction of the new structure continued through the rest of the year. Viehe-Ness's design for Buena Memorial's new church loosely resembled Westminster Abbey. Two massive square towers dominated the front façade, and could

⁴⁵ "Model New Parish House," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 7, 1915, A8.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Bjork, *Saga in Steel and Concrete - Norwegian Engineers in America* (Northfield, Minn.: Loney Press, 2007), 409.



Figures 44 and 45. Buena Memorial Presbyterian's 1923 English Gothic church structure. Ivar Viehe-Ness, the architect, made efficient use of the oddly-shaped lot, fitting the mammoth structure and parish house into the footprint of the former chapel. Chicago Daily Tribune; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1928.

be seen from a great distance along the main thoroughfares of Uptown. The towers also distinguished the church from the three- and four-story apartment buildings that now crowded around it on all sides. Giant wooden doors opened into a grand staircase that led to the main sanctuary. Stained glass windows lined the walls of the church, including a large rose window between the two main towers.⁴⁷ The interior of the church, which seated 1,600 in straight pews flanking a central aisle, was filled with Gothic carvings, vaulted ceilings, and Gothic hanging lamps. In keeping with the Protestant emphasis on the Word of God, the main panel of the carvings depicted the Burning Bush rather than figural representations of saints or biblical figures.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Uptown Chicago History, "Memories of Buena Memorial," <http://uptownhistory.compassrose.org/2009/02/memories-of-buena-memorial-presbyterian.html>, (accessed February 3, 2010).

⁴⁸ In 1996, the church was demolished, with everything inside, after its massive roof caved in.

Because massive, cathedral-type structures had long been identified with Roman Catholicism, the construction of Protestant Gothic cathedrals like Buena Memorial's was one of the more remarkable developments in religious architecture in the twentieth century.⁴⁹ While Protestant churches had utilized the Gothic Revival style in the United States since the 1840's, after the First World War an updated form of Gothic Revival emerged as a status symbol beyond the ecclesiastical sphere, extending to educational buildings (University of Chicago), skyscrapers (Tribune Tower), and private residences (Tudor Revival).⁵⁰ During this period a number of Protestant congregations turned to a Gothic church architecture that, unlike American Gothic Revival churches of the nineteenth century, reproduced both the exterior and interior forms of medieval European Gothic cathedrals.⁵¹ Like Buena Memorial, these "Neo Gothic" churches utilized modern construction methods to create authentic copies of older cathedral forms, through such structural devices as steel-framed trusses encased in wood.

⁴⁹ Monumental cathedral-type building was more common among Catholic congregations on the north side: St. Mary of the Lake (1913-17), Our Lady of Lourdes (1916), St. Thomas of Canterbury (1916), and St. Ita (1924-27) all erected substantial church structures in the period under consideration. However, with the exception of St. Thomas of Canterbury, a Colonial Revival structure, Catholic church buildings reflected Revival styles of traditionally Catholic countries—Spain, Italy, France—whereas Protestant churches stuck primarily to English Gothic/Norman Gothic revivals. See Chapter Five.

⁵⁰ Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 222-223. See also Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "Architecture and Urban Revivalism," in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, Peter W. Williams, ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 184, and *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 206-207.

⁵¹ Ironically, the Protestant turn to pure Gothic occurred just as Roman Catholics began utilizing Colonial Classicism in religious buildings to mark a greater degree of American assimilation. The chapel at Mundelein Seminary, which could be mistaken for a colonial New England Congregational church, is the quintessential example; the Roman Catholic St. Thomas of Canterbury, constructed just off Lawrence Avenue in Uptown in 1916 and mentioned in Chapter Five, also followed this trend.

Because of the Neo Gothic identification with structures outside of the ecclesiastical realm, historian Richard Kieckhefer calls this manifestation of the style “Establishment Gothic.” Neo Gothic churches, he observes, were “designed to project a confident message of status” to quickly developing urban communities; by choosing to build in the Neo-Gothic style, churches were visibly acknowledging ties to social and economic elites.⁵² As Gothic became a marker of cultural respectability regardless of a denomination’s traditions or theology, it became more and more common to see large-scale Protestant churches on busy thoroughfares boasting Gothic arches, multiple bays supported by buttresses, tracery-filled rose windows, and massive bell towers. For interiors, architects abandoned the auditorium seating and pulpit platforms that had dominated Protestant church design in the late nineteenth century and replaced them with longitudinal naves supported by columns and sometimes even included the extremely high church form of the divided chancel and apse.



Figure 46. The interior of Buena Memorial's 1923 structure. Note the straight pews flanking a longitudinal aisle and the prominent rose window, in combination with a traditionally Protestant proscenium arch.

Not entirely by accident, the secular popularity of the Neo-Gothic style coincided with the embrace by many previously non-liturgical Protestants of a new, participatory

⁵² Kieckhefer, 223.

ecclesiasticism in worship, including responsive readings, singing on the part of the congregation rather than just the choir, and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer and Creeds. T.J. Jackson Lears links the intensified use of liturgy in Protestant churches to the rise of a kind of Protestant aestheticism, a reaction to the stripped-down mechanization characteristic of modern society. In architecture, he argues, the Gothic cathedral articulated perceptions of a clear distinction between the fullness and mystery of religion and the soullessness of modern culture: "The fundamental appeal of the cathedral lay in its separation from the secular urban world."⁵³

The transition to Neo-Gothic also reflected a revision of Protestant attitudes about religious space. Critics of the period derided the "family-at-home feeling" of nineteenth-century domestic auditorium churches like Ravenswood Congregational; Von Ogden Vogt, a Chicago Congregationalist minister, opined in his 1921 book *Art and Religion*, "The laws of nature are unyielding and religion can never afford to become soft and easy....A church cannot be like a theater or a drawing room."⁵⁴ Such criticism, Jeanne Halgren Kilde argues, emphasized a new religious perspective oriented away from feminine domesticity towards a more masculine public engagement. According to Kilde, "The shift here constitutes a realignment of the church with the public world. The centrality of the sheltering, defensive character of the home and its nurturing Christian spirit yielded to a more aggressive, public quest for communion with God. The church

⁵³ T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-Modernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 194. One can trace the emergence of such a trend toward ritual and ornament in the acceptance of comfort, ease, and beauty in church structures by the formerly austere Congregationalists of the 1880's, as discussed in Chapter One, but twentieth century Protestant cathedrals called forth a public symbolism diametrically opposite to that of the comfortable, domestic auditorium churches of the late nineteenth century.

⁵⁴ Von Ogden Vogt, *Art and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 205, 208.

should not be a comfortable retreat, but a place from whence the spiritual quest commences.”⁵⁵ The urban environment demanded a more aggressive stance; with so much competition in the form of commercial amusements and an increasingly pluralistic religious landscape, such messages resounded with Protestants’ new concerns about maintaining dominance in the public sphere.

Buena Memorial’s new Gothic cathedral projected it firmly into that public sphere. The building received much attention in the press, with many reports stressing a link between the massive building and the underlying health and vigor of its congregation. In 1920, the Presbyterian denominational magazine *Herald and Presbyterian* pronounced the plans for Buena Memorial’s new church “most attractive...[promising] when completed, to give Buena one of the most beautiful and commodious houses of worship in the city.” The *Herald and Presbyterian* attributed this physical growth to healthy spiritual roots: “The spiritual life of the church has kept pace with its material growth, in fact its material growth has been so large because of its intense spiritual activity.”⁵⁶ Such intense spiritual activity was in part due to Reverend Hepburn’s personal popularity, but also owed a debt to simple demographics. Hepburn himself observed, “[i]n the early days, the church was in a residence community, which next changed into an apartment house district. Now the church is within walking distance of ninety hotels...[and t]he church is crowded to the doors every Sunday, morning and evening.”⁵⁷ By 1921, Buena had become the fifth largest Presbyterian congregation in Chicago and sixtieth in size of

⁵⁵ Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 208.

⁵⁶ Rev. E.N. Ware, “Chicago Letter,” *Herald and Presbyterian* (December 8, 1920), 9.

⁵⁷ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 39, 4.

the ten thousand Presbyterian congregations in the United States. When the church was finally completed in 1923, two thousand people were turned away from the dedication ceremony.⁵⁸

The new Gothic cathedral bestowed on Buena Memorial a physical monumentality that reflected its powerful presence in the lives of thousands of Uptowners, whether they were members of the church or simply passed by it on a daily basis. Contemporaries observed that the “shape of the building lot...has given the Buena Memorial Presbyterian church a unique position, making its towers clearly visible for long distances down the streets and avenues of Uptown Chicago.”⁵⁹ Soon, Buena Memorial became known in popular parlance as “The Great Church at the Crossroads,” a nickname rife with both literal and metaphorical meaning, and one well befitting a church in the process of negotiating the transition from suburban past to urban future.

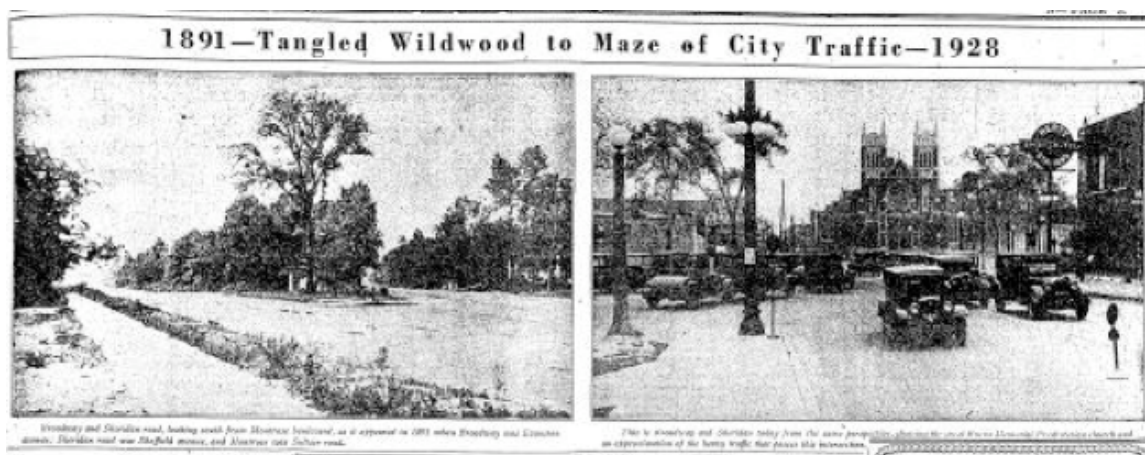


Figure 47. Buena Memorial as the “Great Church at the Crossroads.” From a newspaper feature illustrating the dramatic transformation of the landscape at the intersection of Sheridan Road and Evanston, later Broadway, Avenue between 1891 and 1928. *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

⁵⁸ “Turn Away 2,000 at Dedication of Buena Church,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1923, 12.

⁵⁹ “Humanness of One Man Builds Great Church on North Side,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 16, 1928, 11.

Building a Community Church

Ambitious building programs also responded to deep concerns for the future of Christianity in the city. As seen in the emergence of the city church movement, fears about congregational loyalty and Christian constancy, particularly among youth, motivated the mainstream Protestant denominations to attempt to expand their influence to all facets of members' lives, spiritual and otherwise.⁶⁰ The Religious Education Association, based in Chicago, counseled, "If the church is to hold its place in the life of the future it will become increasingly a community center."⁶¹ In order to compete effectively with the menu of social options available in cities, city churches in changing neighborhoods like Uptown and Edgewater began to offer a broader menu of social and recreational options for their members. Like Buena Memorial, churches often prioritized the construction of a new parish house for church activities over the erection of a dramatic sanctuary.⁶²

⁶⁰ Such broad efforts had not always been necessary. Through the nineteenth century, Protestant churches maintained influence within the church through the exercise of congregational discipline on wayward members and outside the church through public institutions that propagated Protestant values in the wider culture. By the twentieth century, however, church discipline was fading, in the face of waning Protestant influence in a secular world dominated by the forces of consumer capitalism. E. Brooks Holifield observes, "Most congregations could no longer discipline a member for illicit forms of recreation, but they could still hope to maintain influence over recreational choices." E. Brooks Holifield, "Toward a History of American Congregations," in *American Congregations: New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations*, James P. Wind and James Welborn Lewis, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 43.

⁶¹ "The Special Church-School Building Information for Committees on New Buildings," *Religious Education*, Vol. XI (1916): 540.

⁶² Holifield labels such churches "social congregations," defined as those which "sought a different form of comprehensive influence by providing not only worship but also recreation and social services." Social congregations began to emerge in the 1880's; the inclusion of a church parlor in church design served as the chief physical symbol of their appearance. This is as opposed to "comprehensive congregations" of the colonial era, which included all the individuals of a community and served their social, economic and political needs. The specifically religious functions of the nineteenth century activist church made "devotional" congregations. See Holifield, 24.

To fulfill the demands made of a community-centered church, many experts advocated the construction of a separate “community house” for the Sunday School and all social and recreational programs sponsored by the church.⁶³ An influential article published in 1914 in *The Biblical World* outlined the needs of “The Sunday-School Building and Its Equipment” in great detail, calling for a diverse assortment of program-specific spaces, including a large social hall, gymnasium, game and club rooms, and even billiard rooms and bowling alleys.⁶⁴ The author, a professor of education at Grinnell College named Herbert Francis Evans, emphasized the renewed focus on the importance of work with youth: “The modern city has multiplied the influences against the highest type of character to such a degree that the church must broaden her efforts to save boys and girls to the higher life.”⁶⁵ Such efforts should take place not only in Sunday School, but through social clubs and recreational programs created to be an extension of the spiritual and personal development that started at Sunday School: “The church which seeks to direct the leisure time of her youth is in line with the best thought in character development. The more the youth’s interests are centered in the church building, the

⁶³ Other changes contributed to the shape that these new centers of education, socialization, and recreation would take. In 1908, at its annual convention in Louisville, Kentucky, the International Sunday School Association authorized the preparation of graded lesson outlines. This directive replaced a program of Uniform Lessons; instead of placing the entire enrollment of the Sunday School together for lessons, pupils would be separated into age-appropriate sections. The change in policy required the separate classrooms for each grade and class, in addition to space for separate departmental assemblies, necessitating the adoption of a new type of architecture for Sunday Schools. Herbert Francis Evans, “The Sunday-School Building and Its Equipment,” *The Biblical World*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Sep., 1914): 158.

⁶⁴ Evans anticipated the outrage he would incur for suggesting that churches include billiard rooms and bowling alleys in the design of community houses, but countered, “Let those who would criticize sharply the provision for billiards and bowling in the church-house ask the question of themselves. Are buildings more ‘sacred’ than boys?” Evans, 178.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 206.

more certainly may the youth be won for the Christ and for life's highest ideals."⁶⁶ To this end, the community house would be programmed to contain round-the-clock recreational opportunities, to keep the young people of the church at church and away from the snares of popular culture during the week as well as on Sunday.

In 1919, the American Religious Education Division of the Interchurch World Movement undertook a survey of the churches in the city of Malden, Massachusetts, seen as a representative sample of churches in cities across America.⁶⁷ The judges rated church plants on a scale built on six criteria: site, building/buildings, service systems, church rooms, religious school rooms, and community service rooms. The community service rooms accounted for 190 of the 1,000 points on the scale, and the sheer number and variety of community service rooms the survey demanded for a perfect score are remarkable: recreation and dining rooms, a kitchen, library, and reading room; women's and mothers' rooms, rooms for a girls' club, men's club, and boys' club; nurses' and rest rooms, a day nursery room, and social worker's office; and finally a whole panoply of recreational and athletic facilities, including a gymnasium, locker rooms, showers, swimming pool, hand-ball court, game and amusement rooms, and bowling alley. Reviewing the survey for the *American Journal of Sociology*, University of Chicago sociologist Robert Park remarked:

The most striking thing about the survey is the conception, implicit in the whole study, that the church must now be regarded, to a much greater extent than hitherto, as an institution like the public library or the Young Men's Christian

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ The three evaluators—two from the Department of Educational Administration at the Teachers College of Columbia University Teachers, along with the State Superintendent of Religious Education for the State of Massachusetts—rated the churches on a score card for efficiency of church and religious education plants.

Association, in which any member of the community, either directly or indirectly, has an interest, and, correspondingly, the church itself must be regarded as responsible to the community to the extent that it seeks to become a community institution.⁶⁸

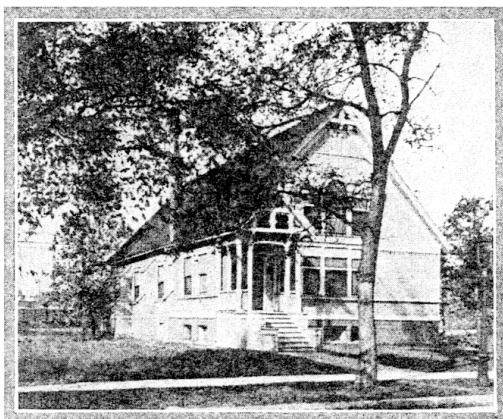
In responding to the needs of the city, many Protestant churches came to regard themselves as more than religious institutions; they were community centers that provided both physical and social recreation in order to further spiritual re-creation.

The New Community House

No project expresses the efforts that north shore churches made to supply space for recreation and leisure activities more than the Edgewater Presbyterian Church's New Community House, both in the scope of its ambition and the clarity of its aims. Like many churches, after its founding in 1896 Edgewater Presbyterian erected a succession of buildings to meet its needs. Within a year of its organization, the congregation had erected a small, single-room frame church with clapboard siding on a rented lot. Nine years later, its membership and monetary resources appreciated enough to merit the hiring of well-known architect George Washington Maher to design a larger stone, auditorium church in the Richardsonian Romanesque style on the southwest corner of Kenmore and Bryn Mawr, two blocks south of the Church of the Atonement.⁶⁹ This church structure served the needs of Edgewater Presbyterian for another decade, but by the late nineteen teens the growth of Edgewater—and the corresponding growth of

⁶⁸ Robert Park, "Review: The Malden Survey," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 27, No. 1(1921): 119.

⁶⁹ Maher had been the second staff architect for John L. Cochran in the early years of the original Edgewater development, and had designed many of the houses in the blocks surrounding the new site at the southwest corner of Kenmore and Bryn Mawr.



Figures 48. Edgewater Presbyterian Church's 1897 frame structure. Edgewater Presbyterian Church archives.

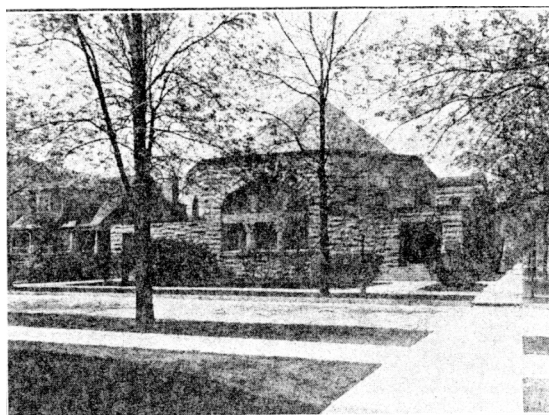


Figure 49. Edgewater Presbyterian's 1906 church, a more imposing stone structure. Edgewater Presbyterian Church archives.

Edgewater Presbyterian's congregation to more than 700 members—led influential members of the congregation to reconsider the building's continuing utility.⁷⁰

The mounting desire among church trustees to expand the church plant led to a prolonged conflict within the church. The Reverend Louis Cain, who had pastored Edgewater Presbyterian for nearly twenty years and guided the building effort for the 1906 church, led a faction that opposed further structural expansion. Eventually, conflict between Cain and the trustees escalated to the point that, in 1918, the pastor felt

⁷⁰ Church growth was not purely accidental. Edgewater Presbyterian Church supported a Publicity Committee, which was in charge of placing banners in front of church, advertising in the three north side newspapers, and distributing window cards and dodgers to members, as well as a Recruiting Committee, which prepared lists of names of prospective members and distributed them to teams of workers who would contact the prospective members, seeking to bring them to meetings “and also, as occasion offered, to say a personal word in regard to their decision for Christ.” Minutes of Elders and Board of Trustees meetings, Oct. 1919- March 1924, March 5, 1924, 191, Edgewater Presbyterian Church records. By the early 1920's, Edgewater Presbyterian's growth strategy included the opening of a sister campus. In the fall of 1923, it started a branch Sunday School in a portable building at California and Granville with three children. By the following summer, the number of pupils had grown to fifty. Albert Lantz, the superintendent of this Sunday School, made clear in a letter to supporters that this Sunday School was to serve the broader community as well: “This building was erected for the benefit of the people living in this district, and it is at their disposal to be used for any purpose for the betterment of this community.” Such a strategy for growth seems to have succeeded, for by 1925 the sister Sunday School had grown into the West Edgewater Presbyterian Church, with its own pastor and administrative staff. Letter from Sunday School Superintendent Albert P. Lantz to “Friend,” April 19, 1924, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

compelled to submit his resignation. Freed of the obstacle of clerical opposition, the trustees moved forward at a meeting on October 7, 1919, appointing a committee to formulate plans for “the enlarging of our church quarters, providing suitable accommodations for the Sunday School and arranging for the Gymnasium, Swimming Pool and other facilities that go to make up a modern plant for church work.”⁷¹ The next major step toward a new building took place in 1921, when the Pastoral Committee recruited the Reverend Asa J. Ferry from his pulpit at the Bethany Temple in Philadelphia. Under Ferry, Bethany Temple had gone from a one year old mission to a membership of 1,700 over fourteen years. Reverend Ferry also led a building campaign that resulted in the construction of a modern church plant worth \$250,000. Members of the Building Committee visited Philadelphia and, upon their return, displayed several views of Ferry’s “church equipment” there. Extremely satisfied with what they saw, on September 11, 1921, the pastoral committee issued a call to Dr. Ferry, “to lead...in the building of a New Church, with adequate facilities for this growing City Community.”⁷²

Meanwhile, the Building Committee continued its evaluation of the church facilities. At first, the committee explored the possibility of expanding the existing church auditorium by two hundred seats, but they determined that the auxiliary functions of the church necessitated a more thoroughgoing physical expansion: “The space at our disposal is...inadequate for the needs of the Bible School and facilities required for thru-the-week

⁷¹ Minutes of Elders and Board of Trustees meetings, Oct. 1919- March 1924, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁷² *The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, Series III, No. 2, June 2, 1927, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

activities.”⁷³ Furthermore, the Building Committee had come to the collective conclusion that, aside from the spatial needs of the congregation itself, the realities of the surrounding community demanded the physical expansion of the church: “Your Committee feels that there lies before this congregation, a rare privilege and opportunity for service during the coming months and years....The apparent indifference to all religious things by so many in this community, is an open challenge, we feel, to this church.”⁷⁴ To respond to this challenge, the committee determined that the construction of a New Community House would be the first and most necessary step of the building program, preceding the erection of a large urban sanctuary.

From the beginning, the promoters of the new Edgewater Presbyterian plant recognized that the argument for the New Community House would have to be situated in a recognition that the old Edgewater had disappeared. One bulletin reminded the congregation of this fact:

The Village of Edgewater is a thing of the past. It was a beautiful little suburb of Chicago when the Edgewater Presbyterian Church was built, some twenty years ago. There are those who wish that it had remained unchanged, but such wishes are vain. The city has flowed over it, with its tides of life and business and pleasure; and we cannot stop the sea! The Village of Edgewater has become an integral part of the City of Chicago.⁷⁵

Supporters of the New Community House pointed to Edgewater’s growing population, expanding businesses, new buildings, and new schools as examples of community growth, arguing that Edgewater Presbyterian and other churches could not fall behind:

⁷³ Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, 28, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ *The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, Series I, No. 8, March 8, 1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

The Churches of Edgewater must meet the new conditions, too. If they insist on remaining Village Churches, they will fail utterly to supply the spiritual needs of the Community, and in a few years they, too, will go to the wall. If they readjust themselves slowly and under protest, resentful of the City, they will lose their place of leadership. If they greet the New Edgewater with a cheer, and face the future with the Optimism and Courage of Faith, they will grow and flourish, and they will help to make Edgewater a place of which all its citizens may be proud.⁷⁶

Fund-raising letters attempted to convince skeptical congregation members by providing testimonials that attested to the need for a new church plant. One bulletin quoted a four-year resident of Edgewater who had initially found Edgewater Presbyterian “a small town church in the midst of a city community.” As a result, he and his wife began attending a downtown city church. By chance, however, the couple “dropped in to see you again...the day you launched your building campaign. We believe you are on the right track, and we intend to cast our lot with you. Put us down for a thousand dollars.”⁷⁷

Promoters of the New Community House specifically linked the centrality of the church to the health of the urban community. By building the Community House first, its planners reasoned, the church could care for the social and spiritual needs of its congregation “and make a far greater contribution to the welfare of Edgewater.”⁷⁸ Service to the community became a byword of the building program. An undated promotional pamphlet with Reverend Ferry on the cover announced that “[t]he Edgewater Presbyterian Church desires to be of genuine service to its community and to its large

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, Series I, No. 6, February 16, 1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

circle of friends outside the immediate community.”⁷⁹ Publicity materials linked salvation to good works on earth, reminding members, “[i]t was to those who had fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and visited the sick, and ministered to the needy, that [Jesus] said, ‘Come, ye blessed.’ What We Do For Others In His Name down here, seems to have a vital relation to what He says to us ‘up yonder.’”⁸⁰ They also framed the public life of churches as vital to the mission of evangelization: “The Churches of Edgewater are seeking to represent Him in this great Community.... They must be greatly enlarged and better supported before they can worthily meet the Challenge of the City.”⁸¹

The promotional material for the New Community House strove to portray it as an institution that would be as vital to community well-being as any other secular institution: “We have already built commodious Public Schools, magnificent Hotels and Apartment Buildings, palatial Motion Picture Houses, imposing Business Blocks – shall we be content with the Churches of a generation ago?”⁸² Office buildings, factories, civic buildings, homes and schools provided services to the community and were investments in its material well-being, these bulletins observed.⁸³ Edgewater Presbyterian’s New

⁷⁹ Promotional pamphlet with Rev. Asa J. Ferry on the cover, c. 1925, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁸⁰ *The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, Series III, No. 3, June 8, 1927, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁸¹ *The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, Series III, No. 3, June 8, 1927, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records. James Lewis observes a similar impetus in his study of Protestant city churches during this period in Gary, Indiana: “Even architecture, and the sacred space it created, was a means of proclaiming the gospel for the city church.” Lewis, 177.

⁸² 1927 *Dedication Program*, 15, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁸³ The new church and school would be “[a]n Office Building to provide adequate quarters for the men and women who shall direct the work of a Corporation with a thousand stockholders, an annual budget of Thirty-Five Thousand Dollars, and with representatives in every corner of the world... A Manufacturing Plant for the making of Character, for the furnishing of those articles – Truth, Honor, Virtue, Righteousness – which are absolutely necessary for the spiritual welfare of our citizens, and without which no civilization

Community House would be an investment as well, but not in the material world: “It is an Investment in Souls, and pays interest in the Character and Conduct in this world, and in Eternal Life in the world to come.”⁸⁴

A Desirable Location

In a community in which the physical environment was under constant flux, determining an optimum location for the New Community House and, eventually, new church presented one of the major issues for the Building Committee. In the early nineteen-twenties, the vast majority of Edgewater Presbyterian’s members still lived within walking distance of the church.⁸⁵ At an early meeting of the Building Committee in May, 1921, members decided unanimously that “a location on Sheridan Road would be very desirable, but that we could not go far from the present location.”⁸⁶

The desire for a Sheridan Road site speaks to an aspiration for high visibility in the community, but this geographic constraint presented several obstacles. An early

can long endure....A Social Center wherein the people of this Community, young and old, may find that sort of relaxation which not only rests but builds....A Training School in which the children of our homes may be taught, from their earliest years, that Divine Truth which alone can thoroughly fit them for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come; and in which young and old may learn those lessons of love and service upon which the coming of the Kingdom of God depends.” *The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, Series I, No. 3, January 26, 1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁸⁴ *The New Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, Series I, No. 3, January 26, 1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁸⁵ A 1922 study of the church membership revealed that “our center of population is at approximately our current location.” Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, 28, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁸⁶ Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, 5. Edgewater Presbyterian Church records. Some sources suggest that a lot had been picked out near the Church of the Atonement, until “a prominent member pointed out that putting the church across the street from the Episcopalian Church was courting disaster.” Pamphlet, *The Endowment Fund of the Edgewater Presbyterian Church*, 1985, 4, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

Building Committee report noted that lots on Sheridan Road cost as much as \$800 a foot, a price that was considered prohibitive.⁸⁷ By November, the committee had examined sites at Sheridan and Hollywood, Sheridan and Catalpa, and Sheridan and Bryn Mawr without finding an affordable, amenable site. Furthermore, the church faced a competitive sellers' market; many property owners entertained far more lucrative offers from commercial developers. When news emerged that a lot just west of the one at Sheridan and Bryn Mawr—on the northeast corner of Bryn Mawr and Kenmore—was also for sale, the Building Committee approached the owner, architect William Ahlschlager, who informed them that plans for a large apartment building had already been prepared for the site. Later, however, Ahlschlager came back with an offer to sell for \$60,000 in return for consideration for the architectural contract of the church buildings. He cautioned, however, that within 72 hours he would also be considering selling to another client who had already prepared blueprints for a 230-room hotel.⁸⁸

With Ahlschlager's offer, members of the Building Committee appear to have determined that the pieces were falling into place for a site for an ambitious new church complex that would occupy the full block between Sheridan Road and Kenmore Avenue along Bryn Mawr Avenue. The owner of the lot at Sheridan Road was willing to sell for \$95,000; with Ahlschlager's property to the west, the church could plan for both a massive community house and a new church building at the site. At a meeting in December, 1921, "[i]t was the unanimous opinion of the Committee that the proposed location was best for the Edgewater Church and the way would be opened; each member

⁸⁷ Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁸⁸ Letter to Paul Steinbrecher & Co. from Walter Ahlschlager, Dec. 22, 1921. Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

promised to continue to pray for direction.”⁸⁹ The sale went through and by April, 1922, Edgewater Presbyterian had installed a sign at the corner of Bryn Mawr and Sheridan, “advertising our church and that property as the location of our new church.”⁹⁰

Other religious congregations were as anxious as Edgewater Presbyterian to secure auspicious sites for new building programs, a fact evidenced by the Presbyterian church’s converse experience as property seller. The identity of these prospective buyers also testifies to the increasing diversity of the Edgewater religious landscape. In May, 1922, a representative from an unnamed Jewish synagogue—almost definitely the North Shore Sons of Israel—approached Dr. Condit of the Building Committee about purchasing the old church property. After receiving various quotes of between \$175,000 and \$200,000, the Jewish congregation promised to hold a meeting “and probably take action looking toward a proposal for the purchase of our property.”⁹¹ This transaction apparently progressed no further, because in January, 1923, officers of the People’s Church in Uptown—then meeting in the Pantheon Theater on Sheridan Road—approached members of Edgewater Presbyterian to inquire into purchasing the property. The two congregations entered into “informal negotiations,” but these negotiations also

⁸⁹ Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, 17. Edgewater Presbyterian Church records. Further obstacles emerged when the committee discovered that an old zoning restriction on Edgewater properties, dating back to John L. Cochran’s original safeguards against multi-family residential construction, limited structures to occupation of only 35% of the area of the lot, with additional height restrictions for residences, excepting towers or steeples. However, once it was determined that this restriction would expire in 1923, the committee moved forward on purchasing both lots, borrowing \$50,000 for this purpose. Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, 25, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁹⁰ Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, 46, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁹¹ May 26, 1922 Meeting, June 2, 1922 Meeting, Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

stalled and by April, 1923, the Building Committee had decided to take the lot containing the old church off the market.⁹²

This decision was motivated by the constantly rising prices of real estate along Bryn Mawr and Sheridan Road. In May, a real estate broker advised the Building Committee of a \$100,000 offer for the corner they had purchased from Ahlschlager only a little more than a year before for \$60,000. The broker attended the Building Committee meeting and “frankly explained to us that there was and would be an increasing demand for corner locations for business improvement, and the value of the properties to be used for business purposes was constantly increasing.”⁹³ The Building Committee began to reconsider their commitment to the site on Sheridan Road. Mr. Moorhead of the committee expressed the opinion that the Sheridan Road property could eventually be sold for as much as \$250,000, and that “the possible sale of the purchased property must receive our very careful and prayerful consideration.” In view of the construction of the massive Edgewater Beach apartment complex at the southeast corner of Bryn Mawr and Sheridan and the completion of the outer Lake Shore Drive within five years, he counseled that “serious consideration should be given in view of the facts as to whether the new location would be really advantageous for the future generation.”⁹⁴

Another member of the Building Committee, George Schmitt, also favored changing the location of the prospective church plant. After Edgewater Presbyterian

⁹² January 21, 1923 Meeting. Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁹³ May 31, 1923 meeting. Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

⁹⁴ May 31, 1923 meeting, Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

purchased the Sheridan Road property, the Chicago Zoning Commission rezoned Sheridan Road from residential to apartments and hotels. At the same time, Bryn Mawr was rezoned from residential to commercial. Schmitt expressed his concern in a letter to Moorhead:

From information at hand I understand that there are to be stores built on the southwest corner of Brynw [sic] Mawr and Sheridan Road, directly opposite the location intended to build the church...and it might become even more objectionable than stores as commercial houses let the district open to gasoline stations, theatres and other objectionable neighbors to a church.

Furthermore, Schmitt cautioned, the heavy traffic on Sheridan Road would pose significant nuisances for members of Edgewater Presbyterian, including difficulty parking, a greater danger to pedestrians, as well as the omnipresent dirt and noise.⁹⁵

Because of these concerns, when the two lots south of the 1906 church came up for sale for a combined price of \$92,500 the Building Committee seriously entertained the prospect of selling the lots between Sheridan Road and Kenmore and simply rebuilding on the present church lot. In June, 1923, they directed committee member C.H. Hoy to purchase the two properties to the south of the present church. The Building Committee obtained authorization from the congregation to sell the lots at Kenmore and Sheridan, and in August, 1924, the church received an offer of \$250,000 for the property at Sheridan and Bryn Mawr, a lot they had purchased for \$95,000 two years before. The committee began formulating plans to use an existing building south of the church as the community house. Then, for reasons that remain unclear, the Building Committee

⁹⁵ Letter to W.H. Moorhead from George Schmitt, June 9, 1923, Building Committee Minutes book, 1921-1922, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

abruptly abandoned these alternate plans and began moving forward on the original proposal to build on the prominent Sheridan/Bryn Mawr/Kenmore lots.

The back and forth maneuverings of the Building Committee and its anxious projections about the future landscape along Bryn Mawr illustrate the dilemmas—both financial and pragmatic—that faced churches attempting to establish themselves on the urban landscape. While the lots to the south of the existing church may have posed the least financial risk to Edgewater Presbyterian, the very visible lots along Bryn Mawr and Sheridan promised a new prominence to the church and fulfilled all of its expressed aims of meeting the Challenge of the City. Perhaps the final determination of the Building Committee to settle on the Sheridan and Bryn Mawr lots had much to do with the price they finally settled on for their old lot on the southwest corner of Kenmore and Bryn Mawr. Neither the Jewish synagogue nor the People's Church ultimately located here. Instead, Edgewater Presbyterian sold their lot to a real estate syndicate that planned to erect a \$2 million, twelve story apartment building on the site of the old church, with 275 kitchenette apartments of one, two, or three rooms, and fourteen shops on first floor. In the competitive real estate market of New Edgewater, when it came to prime corner lots, investments in the world to come rarely trumped investments in the here and now.

The Design of the New Community House

In 1922, Edgewater Presbyterian hired the well-established Chicago architecture firm of Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton to assemble plans for the new plant at the site between Sheridan Road and Kenmore. Of the firm's three partners, lead architect Dwight Perkins was the most famous. After completing his studies at the Massachusetts Institute

of Technology, Perkins worked both for the Boston firm of Henry Hobson Richardson and the famed Chicago firm of Burnham and Root. In 1891, when Daniel Burnham relocated to Chicago's south side to supervise the construction of the Columbian Exposition buildings, he placed Perkins in charge of the firm's downtown office. Later, Perkins was a key player in the development of Prairie School architecture, after he invited a few friends, including Frank Lloyd Wright, to share the loft space of the Steinway Piano Building—which Perkins designed—as a drafting studio. In 1905, Mayor Edward Dunne appointed Perkins the Chief Architect for the Chicago Board of Education, where he was responsible for the design of forty public schools in five years.⁹⁶ The reputation of Perkins' firm with John L. Hamilton and William K. Fellows, started in 1911—and almost surely the reason they were hired to design the New Community House—rested upon the principals' experience as school designers.⁹⁷

The first design submitted by Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton to Edgewater Presbyterian for the New Community House, in 1922, was in the Norman Gothic Style, faced with smooth stone, with a main entrance in a square tower facing Kenmore; the

⁹⁶ The most famous of Perkins' Chicago schools is the Carl Shurz High School on Lincoln Avenue. In his position as Chief Architect for the Board of Education, Perkins also designed park buildings for the Chicago parks system: Hamlin Park Field House, Lion House and refectory at Lincoln Park Zoo. *Prairie Styles: An Online Museum of Prairie Style Architecture*, "Dwight Perkins," <http://www.prairiestyles.com/perkins.htm>, accessed November 17, 2009.

⁹⁷ Hamilton had worked with Perkins between 1908 and 1910 for the Board of Education. By 1925, Perkins was almost totally deaf, and the firm was dissolved in 1927. The final architects on the 1927 dedication program are listed as Hamilton, Fellows & Wilkinson. Hamilton and Fellows' interest in school design continued into Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton, and later Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved, est. 1927. Later school designs by Hamilton and Fellows are "noted for their attention to layout and traffic flow representing a new or modern approach to school design." The full service facilities "provid[e] many special use areas in addition to the normal classroom space." National Historic Register Nomination, Wyandotte High School, Kansas City, Missouri, January 7, 1986, prepared by Martha Gray Hagedorn of the Kansas State Historical Society.

projected church building was to have a similar square tower.⁹⁸ By 1926, these plans had been significantly revised, most probably in response to an evolving understanding of the programmatic needs of the Community House. The final design was similar in spirit to the original plans, but it enlarged the building, tweaked the programming focus, and rendered the exterior in a French Romanesque style.⁹⁹ In a shift that speaks to the changing understanding of the building's role in the community, the main entry was shifted to face the more commercial Bryn Mawr Avenue, rather than the residential Kenmore.

The revised exterior of the New Community House represented a combination of the traditional and the modern. Though faced with smooth Indiana limestone, the fireproof structure was constructed of steel and reinforced concrete. Situated directly up to the sidewalk on the corner of a bustling commercial district, the building projected symbolic tropes of medieval Gothic churches executed in a modernist style, with the entrances flanked by capitals with carved figures that conveyed religious meanings. The figures above both the main entrance and the side entrance were executed from drawings made by Emil Zettler, a well-known and prolific Chicago artist and sculptor. Eleven

⁹⁸ The 1922 Community House design planned for two full floors, with a third, L-shaped story fronted with pointed dormers. All three stories opened onto L-shaped corridors that paralleled Bryn Mawr and Kenmore. On the first floor, plans called for an auditorium seating five hundred on the main floor and three hundred in the gallery, with a gymnasium abutting the front wall of the auditorium. The basement would hold a large dining room with kitchen, a men's room with adjoining billiard room, a games room, a bowling alley, and a locker room connected to the gymnasium upstairs, plus utilities. Second floor plans called for nine rooms for senior classes, in addition to a gallery for the gymnasium and two primary dept rooms. The L-shaped third floor held ten intermediate class rooms and nine junior class rooms.

⁹⁹ By the time of the second design, only the wide, L-shaped corridors, lofty ceilings, and large windows remained from the original plans. The basement—which had been one of major complaints about the 1906 Maher-designed church structure—was eliminated, with the plans enlarged to include four full stories. The main auditorium now faced north rather than east, and the gymnasium was moved up to the third floor, replaced by a dining room and kitchen on the first floor that opened up, Akron-plan style, into the main auditorium. The new plans added a residential component to the structure; the fourth floor now contained three apartments: one for the pastor, one for the sexton, and one for the building caretaker.

biblical figures, each marked by traditional symbols, presided over the Bryn Mawr entrance, while the Kenmore entrance had carved panels representing “Home Life,” with a father, mother and child.¹⁰⁰ With these figures, the two entrances symbolically depicted two portals into the religious world: through the Bible and through the home.

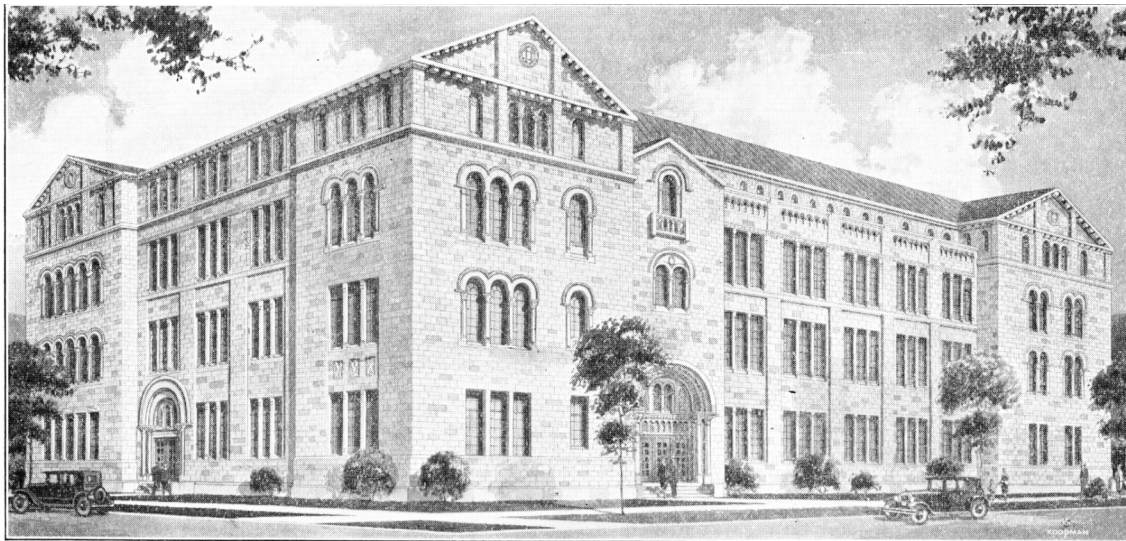


Figure 50. A rendering of the 1927 New Community House. From the perspective of Bryn Mawr and Kenmore Avenues looking northeast. Edgewater Presbyterian Church archives.

The interior of the New Community House was a model of efficiency and modern technology, with seventy-five rooms spread out over four floors. Wide, L-shaped corridors connected the major common areas, with open stairwells at each corner linking the floors. An elevator was available as well, primarily for the use of the families in the apartments provided on the fourth floor for the pastor, the pastor’s assistant, and the

¹⁰⁰ The Old Testament figures, from left to right, are Moses with tables of law and a horned face, David with a crown and harp, Amos with a shepherd’s crook, Isaiah with sackcloth and a scroll of prophecy depicting the Virgin and son, and Malachi, with an angel and scroll. These figures are linked to the New Testament figures of John the Baptist with a book reclining on a lamp, Matthew with a tau cross and a dolphin at his feet, Mark with a book and the head of a lion, Luke with twinned serpents and the head of an ox, John with a palm branch, chalice and serpent, and Paul holding a sword and covering his right eye with his hand.

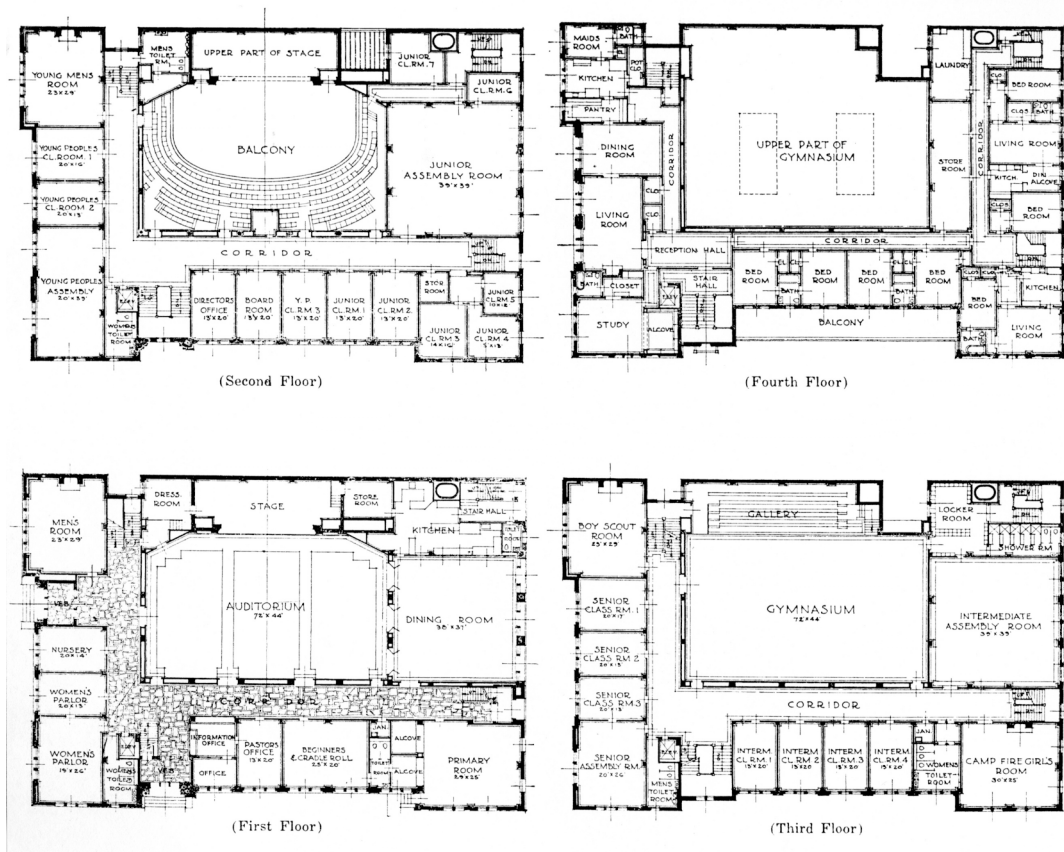


Figure 51. Floor plans for the four stories of the New Community house. Edgewater Presbyterian Church archives.

sexton. The *Official Directory of the Protestant Churches of Metropolitan Chicago* described the contents of the building in detail:

It has no basement, except for the heating and mechanical plants. On the first floor are: an Auditorium seating 750; a Dining Room accommodating 250, with kitchen attached; Departments for Cradle Roll, Beginners and Primary; a Nursery; Ladies' Parlor; Men's Club Room; and Church Offices. On the second floor are: the Gallery of the Auditorium; Department and Class Rooms for Juniors and Young People; Young People's Parlor; Young Men's Club Room; and Offices for the Director. On the third floor are: Standard Gymnasium with lockers and showers; Department and Class Rooms for Intermediates and Seniors; High School Group Parlor; and Club Rooms for Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls. On the

fourth floor are the three complete Apartments for the Minister, the Director, and the Sexton.¹⁰¹

The building boasted modern technological advances as well, with a complete thermostatic control system and mechanical ventilation. The auditorium had a stage and was also equipped for the screening of motion pictures.

After a two-hour church meeting, the congregation unanimously approved the revised plans on January 25, 1926. The church hired the company of church member James Shedden, a stalwart of the Building Committee since its inception in 1921, to serve as contractor for the project. Ground was broken on April 17, 1926, and work continued through the summer on the foundations. On October 24, the *Northside Sunday Citizen* noted the laying of the cornerstone, proclaiming “[t]he four story building which is to be a center for the religious, educational and recreational life of Edgewater.”¹⁰² Throughout the winter, expectations rose. Not everyone in the congregation supported the move, however: on the weekend before the last Sunday in the old church, the church bulletin announced, “[a] long expected day, whether dreaded or desired, has come at last.”¹⁰³ Whether dreaded or desired, on January 28, 1927, the congregation held its last service in the old church, which was demolished that spring. During the transition period, the Sunday School met in the basement of Swift School on Winthrop between Thorndale and

¹⁰¹ *Official Directory of the Protestant Churches of Metropolitan Chicago, 1927-28*. (Chicago: Young People’s Commission of the Chicago Church Federation, 1928), 47, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

¹⁰² “Presby Lays Cornerstone Today at 3:30,” *Northside Sunday Citizen*, October 24, 1926, 1.

¹⁰³ Edgewater Presbyterian Church program, January 30, 1927, 4, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

Ardmore. Finally in the late spring of 1927, the New Community House was completed, at a final cost of \$422,257.87.

A “program of Christian service”

The completion of the New Community House allowed Edgewater Presbyterian to expand its menu of programs and services for congregation members and the wider community. The building was run by a Council of Religious Education, with the Director of Religious Education as Chairman, which guided a “program of Christian service, Church-centered, but Community wide in scope.”¹⁰⁴ In September, 1929, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* noted that “[t]he membership of Edgewater Presbyterian church has shown a great increase since the dedication of the new building and community house last winter. There are approximately 1,400 men and women in constant attendance.”¹⁰⁵ That year, church workers calculated that 3,000 people passed through the door of the church each week, for “Worship, Instruction, Fellowship, Recreation.”¹⁰⁶

In keeping with the aims of the community church, Edgewater Presbyterian hosted a wide variety of programs for youth at the New Community House: the Young Peoples Society for college age members to discuss vital problems of the day; the Senior Christian Endeavor with a similar focus for high school students; the Nothwode club, based on Indian lore, for young boys; Boy Scout Troop 812; Camp Fire Girls for older girls and Blue Bird Girls for younger girls; the Young Peoples Chorus; and a young

¹⁰⁴ 1927 *Dedication Program*, 15, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

¹⁰⁵ “Church Starts Busy and Varied Fall Program,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 22, 1929, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Church bulletin, 1929, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

people's orchestra. One of the most remarkable institutions at Edgewater Presbyterian was the Cross Bible Class for young men and women. By 1931, the boys' Cross Class had 700 members between 16 and 25 years old, making it "the largest class of Bible school boys in the world."¹⁰⁷ Meredith Lloyd Scanlon, who started in the Sunday School in 1915 or 1916 and attended Edgewater Presbyterian until 1952, recalled, "[b]ecause of the size of the Cross Classes most all of my social life was with this group. I can remember that police often closed off Bryn Mawr Ave. in front of the church because we spilled over into the street when dismissed!!"¹⁰⁸

With the completion of the New Community House, announced the Chicago Church Federation, "[t]he dream of the Edgewater Presbyterian church to have one of the finest religious plants in the city is now moving toward fulfillment."¹⁰⁹ By the early thirties, the membership of Edgewater Presbyterian had more than doubled from when planning for the New Community House began in 1921, with over 1,500 members and 2,100 Sunday School attendees.¹¹⁰ For two years after the completion of the New Community House, the congregation moved forward on plans to construct the church building that would complete a fabled "million dollar" church plant. Meanwhile, the

¹⁰⁷ "Church Starts Busy and Varied Fall Program," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 22, 1929, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Meredith Lloyd Scanlon to Irma Miller, August 27, 1995, Centennial Binder, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records. Such domination of young people's social lives by church-sanctioned clubs or Sunday School class was not usual among city churches. In his memoir, a young man who grew up going to Buena Memorial Presbyterian recalled that "I went to Sunday school there and made a lot of friends....I had probably more social life—more friends came out of the Sunday school than out of the high school" that he attended. *Robert P. Howard Memoir*, University of Illinois at Springfield, Norris L. Brookens Library, Archives/Special Collections, 24, <http://www.uis.edu/archives/memoirs/HOWARDRvI.pdf>, accessed February 3, 2010.

¹⁰⁹ *Official Directory of the Protestant Churches of Metropolitan Chicago, 1927-28*, 49.

¹¹⁰ "35th Anniversary Bulletin," Edgewater Presbyterian Church, 1931, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

congregation used the Community House auditorium for regular church services. The Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton plans projected a monumental Protestant cathedral on the order of Buena Memorial, an Italian Romanesque church faced in variegated and colored Indiana limestone to preside over busy Sheridan Road.

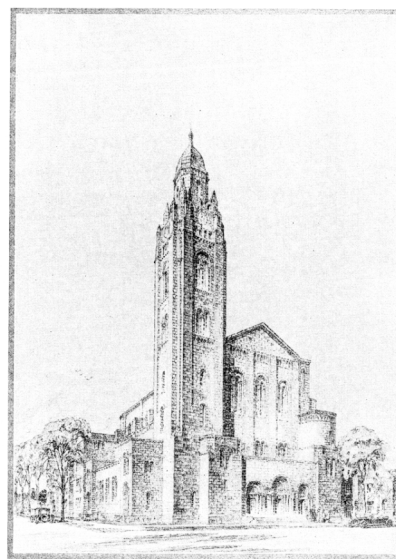


Figure 52. The proposed design for Edgewater Presbyterian's church structure. EPC archives.

On many levels, the New Community House was a success. However, its construction stretched the finances of the church nearly to the breaking point. The stock market crash in October, 1929, and the ensuing depression left Edgewater Presbyterian in a precarious position. As the Church of the Atonement had experienced three decades years before, the debt incurred by an ambitious building program could hobble a congregation even as it prepared it for future service. Through the 1930's, the parish experienced real financial hardship because of the debt incurred by the 1926 building program, sometimes skating at the edge of financial insolvency. In 1931, Reverend Ferry advised the congregation:

Obviously the needs of a great Church in a growing community, the cost of maintaining and operating a great structure such as our Community House, cannot be met without the assumption of corresponding financial obligations....At the present moment we face a crisis forced on us by circumstances beyond our control. The financial commitments of the Church have become increasingly difficult to bear without some revision of the program.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Pamphlet, "Refinancing Campaign," ECP, 1931, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

By 1933, the church reached a crisis point: the mortgage was past due and the congregation was still holding on to the property at Bryn Mawr and Sheridan. Reverend Ferry devised a bizarre scheme to raise money through the sale of life insurance policies to members of the congregation. Then, “[t]aking a leaf from many books,” he formulated a Five Year Plan to deal with the existing debt, part of which involved the sale of the Sheridan lot and the permanent abandonment of plans for a new church structure.¹¹² The congregation finally paid off the enormous debt from the New Community House during the pastorate of Adolph Bohn, who served from 1938 to 1966, but by then the dream of the million dollar church plant was long past.

Conclusion

In 1929, Edgewater Presbyterian Church proclaimed of the New Community House: “A Hundred Years from now, we confidently believe, this Doorway will still be issuing its gracious invitation to our children’s children.”¹¹³ While the New Community House did survive, the social mobility endemic to Edgewater continued to influence the church. The grandchildren of its builders were not likely to remain; in 1934, the church bulletin reported resignedly, “[n]aturally, in this community, with its constant changes, many have moved away and are now associated with other churches.”¹¹⁴ Yet with its staggering financial investment in the New Community House, Edgewater Presbyterian Church solidified its commitment to Edgewater and to the city and it did remain, a

¹¹² Pamphlet, “A Five Year Plan,” EPC, 1933, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

¹¹³ Church bulletin, 1929, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

¹¹⁴ “The Presbyterian,” Vol. 1, No. 2 (1934), 1, Edgewater Presbyterian Church Records.

quintessentially urban church. Reverend Ferry accomplished what he had been called to do, build a new church for a city community.

The nineteen-teens and –twenties were a period of reinvention for many churches in Uptown and Edgewater, where the effects of urbanization were most acute. Drawing from the Social Gospel model of institutional churches, north shore churches responded to changing circumstances by broadening their missions and expanding their physical plants, creating church structures that asserted a continuing religious presence in urban life. The city church in some ways paralleled the old Ravenswood model, in that it sought to attract members of the congregation and the broader community to the church throughout the week, for a variety of different offerings. However, the city church was a conscious institution that sought to work within the constructs of twentieth century urban culture and twentieth century urban space.

The revolving electric cross atop the steeple of Ravenswood Congregational, the Gothic cathedral erected by Buena Memorial, and the New Community House built by Edgewater Presbyterian all demonstrate the ways that churches in Uptown, Edgewater, and Ravenswood attempted to assert themselves in the busy and complex round of city life. Such efforts illustrate that Protestant churches no longer identified themselves with the domestic precincts of the home; instead, during this period of constant change, these churches thrust themselves into public life and public space. Rather than shrinking in the face of an aggressively expanding commercialism, churches rose to the challenge of the city and made a place for themselves in urban space.

CHAPTER FIVE:
“A PART OF THE GREAT METROPOLITAN LIFE”:
THE URBAN RELIGIOUS MARKETPLACE

In the late 1920's, long-time ministers in the north shore districts grew reflective about the dramatic changes that had taken place in only twenty years. In a 1928 interview, the Reverend J. Morriston Thomas, pastor of Ravenswood Congregational Church, declared, “The changes that have taken place in the neighborhood are astounding....When my own pastorate began in 1913, there was a golf course just across the river. Now it's built up solidly for miles. And the neighborhood continues to change.” In a more stable community, Dr. Thomas observed, “a minister would have just the ordinary changes in his congregation through the years. Here I have seen the neighborhood change from a local home community to a part of the great metropolitan life.”¹ The crux of the challenge, according to Thomas, lay in sustaining the vitality of his congregation as members—particularly the younger generations—moved away: “Our great problem of churches thus situated is to make up for the losses caused by constant change—at least break even.”²

¹ “Prairie Church Caught in Web of Growing City,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 17, 1929, 11.

² Ibid. Even with the changes recounted by Dr. Thomas, Ravenswood's population remained far more stable than either Edgewater or Uptown. Many members of Ravenswood Congregational were descendants of the old Ravenswood families as late as 1940. “Church Recalls Its Founding in Area of Marsh,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 21, 1940, N1.

In Uptown, Buena Memorial Presbyterian's Reverend Henry Hepburn knew something of this problem: "We've ministered to three distinct changes in the neighborhood these twenty years." At the beginning of Hepburn's pastorate in 1909, Buena Memorial stood amidst the homes of stately, suburban Buena Park. In the succeeding decade, flats replaced these homes, but these flats soon met the wrecking ball as well. By the late nineteen-twenties, the "Great Church at the Crossroads" confronted the transient population of Uptown's huge apartment hotels, for whom the simple task of keeping up with addresses presented a problem. Hepburn evinced some nostalgia for the old days: "When folk lived in the same house all their days, it meant more permanent acquaintanceship." Yet he remained as committed to serving this new population as he had to the old: "The need of the human heart is as great today as it ever was, no matter how much we may be in the midst of material changes."³

Geographical constraints had structured the "permanent acquaintanceship" that characterized the traditional relationship of church and community. Hepburn himself observed, "Twenty years ago, members lived close to their church."⁴ As the twentieth century progressed, the material changes fueled by succeeding technological innovations—the streetcar, the telephone, the automobile, the radio—gradually vanquished constraints of geography and space in many aspects of urban life. Such developments particularly undermined the strength of "place-based" congregations bound together by geographical proximity and the social ties engendered by such proximity.

³ "Humanness of One Man Builds Great Church on North Side," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 16, 1928, 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

By the end of the 1920's, the traditional relationship of religion and space outlined in Chapter One—one church at the geographic and social center of a unified community—no longer predominated on the north shore. Instead, the exigencies of the modern city effected a fragmentation of the religious landscape into a patchwork of touching, but not always relating, sub-communities in a competitive religious marketplace.⁵ As the twentieth century progressed, the increasing numbers and growing diversity of the north shore's population meant that a wider range of religious faiths came to be reflected in public space, complicating any claims to Protestant or even Christian hegemony on the landscape. Furthermore, the steady demand for new church members “to make up for the losses caused by constant change” drove many Protestant churches on the north shore to distinguish themselves by borrowing marketing tactics from the commercial sphere. Finally, a growing schism in American Protestantism gave rise to conflicting views of moral geography and spiritual authority in the city, with Protestant churches increasingly appealing to niche markets of like-minded believers. All of these factors undermined the strict ties of a local church to its surrounding neighborhood. In the twenties, the turn of some north shore ministers to religious radio broadcasts transcended geography altogether, uniting isolated individuals across the Midwest in imaginary faith communities that occupied only the disembodied space of a radio bandwidth.

⁵ See Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, University Press, 1978), 148. See also William H. Anderson, “The Local Congregation as a Subculture,” *Social Compass* 18 (1971): 287-91; Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” reprinted in Richard Sennett, ed. *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), 143-64. These authors posit that the sub-community status can resemble rural Protestantism in many of its manifestations.

A Range of Spiritual Identities on Display

University of Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth observed that in the modern city “an increase in numbers...tends to produce differentiation and specialization.”⁶ This specialization of functions extends to the religious realm as well, a dynamic that is particularly evident in the religious landscape. In the public world of the city, a religious group gains exposure by creating spatial markers of its existence, whether the marker is a single modest structure, a complex of buildings, a public meeting, or simply a visible sign announcing a weekly service.

As a result, urbanites come into contact with a broad spectrum of religious public displays and outlooks, whether they seek out a diversity of values or not. In cities, “[o]ne has no choice but to confront the religious ‘other.’”⁷ Rhys Williams expands upon this observation by noting that in an urban environment,

no matter how sealed one’s theology—how bright the line between the saved and the damned—one must see the nonelect every day and decide on a practical response to them (even if not a theologized response)...Thus, the city becomes a site of multiple mini-publics, each mapping the city according to their own place, their own sense of the sacred, and always in relation to the communities and physical spaces around them.”⁸

As different religious groups—“mini-publics”—establish themselves on the landscape, each must distinguish itself not only from surrounding secular elements of the landscape, but from other religious groups as well. As Wirth notes, “The urban world puts a

⁶ Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” (1938) in *Cities and Churches: Readings on the Urban Church*, Robert Lee, ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 26.

⁷ Rhys H. Williams, “Review Essay: Religion, Community, and Place: Locating the Transcendent,” *Religion and American Culture* 12, no. 2 (2002): 259.

⁸ Ibid.

premium on visual recognition.”⁹ Through spatial markers, religious groups announce their identities and contrast them to competing religious identities.

From their suburban origins, the religious landscapes of Ravenswood, Edgewater, Sheridan Park and Buena Park reflected the social demographics of these communities. Chapters One and Two have demonstrated that as the population of each community increased, its religious landscape became crowded with a greater variety of mainline Protestant denominations. However, as long as the communities of the north shore remained ethnically and socio-economically homogeneous, the religious groups represented on the landscape presented a homogenous front as well: the handsome Stick Style, Gothic, or Romanesque church structures belonging to Congregational, Methodist Episcopal, Episcopal, and Presbyterian congregations were hardly distinguishable from one another. Even the early frame structures erected by Anglo-Irish Catholic parishes like Our Lady of Lourdes in Ravenswood and St. Ita in Edgewater reflected prevailing structural norms.

This homogeneity began to be challenged in the first decade of the twentieth century, around the same time that Protestant churches commenced their public battles over the moral geography of the north shore. The first sacred structures to articulate a distinct stylistic identity were Christian Science churches erected in Edgewater and Ravenswood. The product of one of the most fashionable religious trends among upper class Americans in the first decades of the twentieth century, Christian Science churches

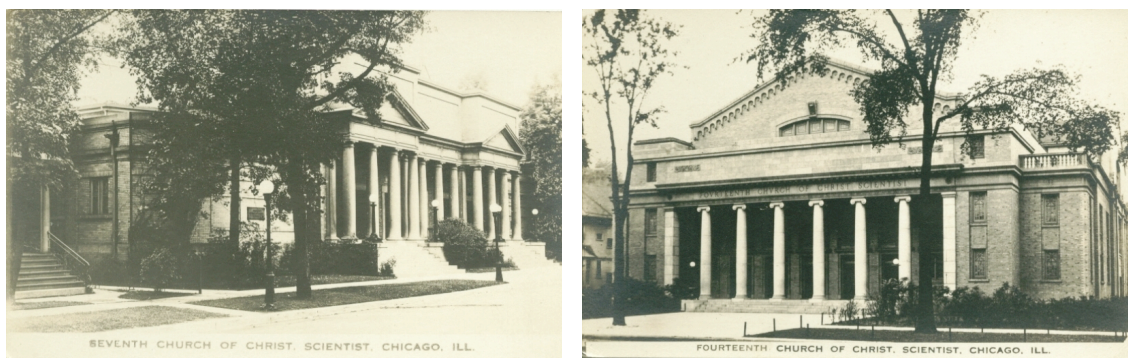
⁹ Wirth, 26.

did not project the arrival of a new ethnic or class group onto the landscape.¹⁰ They did, however, announce a departure from the hegemony of nineteenth century evangelical Protestantism.

The Seventh Church of Christ Scientist—planned by Chicago architect Solon Beman, a prolific designer of Christian Science churches—was erected in Edgewater in 1908 on the northwest corner of Hollywood and Kenmore, kitty corner from the old Gothic edifice of the Church of the Atonement. A three-story Classic Revival building of large, rectangular masses, the Seventh Church boasted a portico with a double pediment and two wide stairs leading up to it.¹¹ The interior featured a large foyer that opened into the gray and white auditorium, with mahogany pews to seat 1,500 people.

¹⁰ Christian Science, founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879, appealed to the wealthiest and best-educated Americans and gained disproportionate cultural influence to the number of its members, which never rose about more than a quarter million. Like spiritualism and transcendentalism, which were also popular around the turn of the twentieth century, Christian Science emphasized the primacy of spiritual reality over material reality and attracted Anglo Protestants looking for spiritual intensity in a modern culture they saw as bereft of it. Religious historian George Marsden attributes the popularity of Christian Science to cultural flux: “one indicator of the religious tensions building in a culture is the types of new religious movements that spin off from it.” Marsden also likens the movement to Jehovah’s witnesses—embraced by a lower class of adherents—in that both groups responded to the secularism and materialism of modern society “by asserting the primacy of the supernatural.” George Marsden, *Religion and American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1990), 160. See also George Shaw Cook, “What Christian Science Stands For,” *The Midwestern*, Vol. 3 (Des Moines, Iowa: Greater Des Moines Publishing Company, 1908), 20-29.

¹¹ Solon Beman was the single architect most identified with classic Christian Science churches. Born in Brooklyn, Beman trained in the New York office of Richard Upjohn, who popularized the Gothic and believed firmly in the moral capabilities of architecture. Beman moved to Chicago in 1879—the year Eddy founded Christian Science—and became immediately successful, later receiving high profile commissions for George Pullman’s company town south of the city, the Pullman Building, and Grand Central Station. Beman’s connection with Christian Science began when he designed the 1st Chicago church in 1897; he would go on to design the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Chicago churches as well, and eventually himself converted from Episcopalianism to Christian Science. Beman’s Christian Science churches, nearly forty in all, derived from three templates: a basilica with a classical porch; a large central-plan domed church with classical porch; and a smaller, library-type edifice. Later in his career, his son Spencer Beman joined his firm; together and separately, the two men designed more than ninety Christian Science churches. Paul Eli Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 139-153.



Figures 53 and 54. *The Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, 1908, left, and the Fourteenth Church of Christ, Scientist, 1918, right. Both structures share the wide stairs, columns, and triangular pediments of the Classic Revival Style. Postcards, courtesy of Chicago History in Postcards.*

Despite condemnation of the sect from mainline churches, Christian Science gathered a strong following on the north shore.¹² The first formal lecture at the Seventh Church drew 1,800 people and, within a month, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that the Edgewater congregation numbered between 650 and 700 persons.¹³ In 1918, consistent growth prompted church leaders to build a second north shore church. They chose a lot two blocks east of the 1890 Ravenswood Methodist Episcopal Church for the construction of the Fourteenth Church of Christ Scientist, another Classic Revival structure designed by N. Max Dunning and C.A. Jensen.

Christian Scientists used the Classic Revival style to present a unified image in the public sphere and to promote solidarity among different congregations across the

¹² In 1904, *The Clarion*, the bulletin published by the Church of the Atonement in Edgewater, published an editorial on Christian Science, claiming that the sect “builds up selfishness incarnate in the individual.” The editorialist particularly objected to the doctrine “There is no sin,” arguing that in effect it means “Whatever I do is right.” The writer attributed to Christian Science the murder of children and the break up of marriages, concluding by saying, “Christian Science when wholly embraced becomes and is a phase of insanity....Christian Science comes as near being blasphemy against the Holy Ghost as one can imagine.” *The Clarion*, 6, no. 2 (1904), 6.

¹³ “Lecture Fills New Church,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 28, 1908, 10; “Preparing to Build Temple,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 28, 1907, 3.

United States.¹⁴ Church leaders viewed the style as appropriate for several reasons. First, Christian Science gained its first broad exposure at the World's Parliament of Religions Auxiliary Congress at Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition, which popularized the Classic Revival style generally. Furthermore, the classical style aptly expressed the metaphysical concepts and language that formed the theological basis of Christian Science. Finally, the style implicitly challenged the mysticism of traditional Christianity and the Gothic architecture that symbolized this mystical element. In an important 1907 essay, Solon Beman defended the Scientists' reliance on a single style: with "its sense of calm proportion, its sincerity and refinement, and...its rationalism...represent the faith of those who employ it in their house of worship."¹⁵

Starting in the late nineteen-teens, Roman Catholic congregations on the north shore embarked on their own building programs. While modest Catholic church building on the city's periphery began under Archbishop James Quigley around 1900, the period of George Cardinal Mundelein's office, from 1916 to 1939, has been characterized as "The Golden Age of Catholic Church-Building." Mundelein's first order of business was to establish an "American Church" model in Chicago. His second, expressed in one of his first speeches as cardinal, was "to make Chicago more beautiful in its religious

¹⁴ Ivey, 149-150.

¹⁵ Quoted in Ibid, 153. See original source, Solon S. Beman, "The Architecture of the Christian Science Church," *The World To-day Magazine* 12, no. 6 (1907): 586-88. Donald Meyer also observes that "mind-cure" churches—including those erected by Christian Scientists—"tended to blend in prosaically with the civic and commercial buildings, libraries, and banks of the middle-class suburban landscape....In their frequent physical resemblance to banks, mind-cure edifices symbolized a standard middle-class wish about the bank—security." Donald B. Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 105.

edifices.”¹⁶ By encouraging the construction of monumental churches by American-style congregations in predominantly American sections of the city, Mundelein accomplished both aims at once. Ellen Skerrett observes, “For upwardly mobile Catholics who settled in Protestant dominated areas [like Uptown, Edgewater, and Ravenswood], parish formation and church building took on added meaning.”¹⁷

Under Mundelein’s program of diocesan support, north shore parishes proclaimed a confident, established, and permanent Americanized Catholic presence through their religious structures. St. Thomas of Canterbury, founded in Uptown in 1916, was considered one of the most “American” parishes in the Chicago diocese. To broadcast its assimilation into modern American life, St. Thomas constructed a Colonial Revival church—complete with an imposing pediment and pillars—just off Lawrence Avenue. In 1928, the parish priest attested to both St. Thomas’ native born membership and the skewed demographics that Uptown’s apartment buildings had created: “At least eighty per cent of the congregation of four hundred are young people. The majority of these young people come from small towns from all over the United States.”¹⁸



Figure 55. St. Thomas of Canterbury, 1916. The pediment and pillars echoed the Georgian styles of the colonial period in the United States. This style, also used for Mundelein Seminary, expressed an exuberantly American Catholicism. St. Thomas of Canterbury.

¹⁶ George W. Mundelein, *Two Crowded Years* (Chicago: Extension Press, 1918), 72, 76.

¹⁷ Ellen Skerrett, Edward R. Kantowicz and Steven M. Avella, *Catholicism, Chicago Style* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993), 158.

¹⁸ Vivian Palmer Documents, Uptown I, doc. 49, 1. Speaker is Msgr. Fox, the pastor of St. Thomas Canterbury in January, 1928.

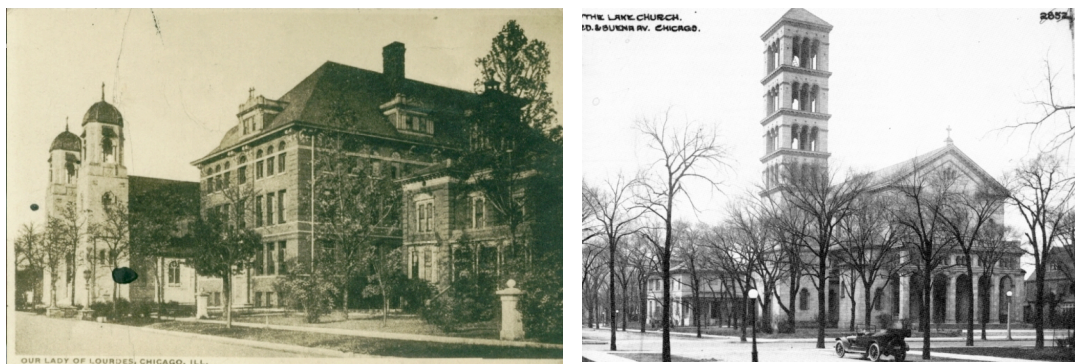


Figure 56, left. Our Lady of Lourdes parish plant facing Ashland Avenue. From left to right, the 1916 church structure, school, and convent. Figure 57, right. St. Mary of the Lake, with its eight-story campanile. For a sense of the scale of St. Mary of the Lake, note the three-story rectory to the left of the church. Both images courtesy of Chicago History in Postcards.

Starting in the mid-nineteen-teens, the older parishes of Our Lady of Lourdes in Ravenswood, St. Mary of the Lake in Uptown, and St. Ita in Edgewater also embarked on epic building programs, culminating in monumental church structures with vast, architecturally coherent church plants, including schools, rectories, convents, and church halls. These buildings competed with—and often in design and ornament overshadowed—neighboring Protestant churches. On Ashland Avenue, Our Lady of Lourdes constructed an imposing Spanish Revival building in 1915, surrounded by a school, convent, and rectory. When the city widened Ashland to create a boulevard in 1929, rather than cutting off the front steps of the church Our Lady of Lourdes elected to move the massive church to the west side of the street, turn it by 45 degrees, and extend the sanctuary by thirty feet to accommodate 1,200 persons.¹⁹ On Sheridan Road in Buena Park, Cardinal Mundelein's preferred architect, Chicago-born Henry Schlacks, designed a

¹⁹ "Church is Up On Stilts Waiting for Moving Man," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 9, 1928, K2. This article states that Our Lady of Lourdes' original frame building, pictured in Chapter Three, was still standing in 1928 and was razed to make way for the new church situation. Interestingly, the article also states that the church acquired the original church from the Chicago and North Western railroad.

sprawling Italian Revival plant modeled on several Roman churches for St. Mary of the Lake (1917). In Edgewater, Schlacks created a magnificent French Gothic church for St. Ita (1927) on Broadway. The architect cleverly referenced Mundelein's influence on St. Ita by integrating the repeated letter "M" into the stonework of the roofline balustrade.

As impressive Christian Science and Roman Catholic churches forcefully spelled an end to the hegemony of mainline Protestantism on the north shore's religious landscape, a widening range of ethnic groups imprinted their religious presences on the landscape as well. By 1925, the Anglo origins of the original suburban settlers had been largely overwritten, with one scholar observing of the commercial life on the north shore:

As far as the people are concerned it cannot be said that any nationality predominates; rather, they are distinctly American in that they represent many races. The shops have every modern contrivance; there is no mark which is distinctly of any nationality if one except the pickled fish in the delicatessen which are at the same time so Polish, Swedish, Norwegian, Jewish, etc., as to be almost cosmopolitan.²⁰

This cosmopolitanism was reflected in religious life as well. At Buena Memorial Presbyterian, with its more than 2,000 members, Reverend Hepburn related that "we have, in our bible class, had a text repeated in sixteen different languages."²¹

In Ravenswood and west Edgewater—which included the Andersonville and Summerdale neighborhoods—the number and variety of Swedish churches attested to this group's status as the largest foreign-born ethnic group on the north shore after 1900.²² In contrast to other ethnic groups that immigrated to the United States, Swedes

²⁰ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 54, 1.

²¹ "Humanness of One Man Builds Great Church on North Side," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 16, 1928, 11.

²² Before, the Rosehill and Summerdale Congregational churches established by Ravenswood Congregational's Reverend Lloyd in the 1870's had served the residents of these communities, but by the

experienced significant fracturing of religious identity in the old country. This splintered religious identity meant that Swedish residents of the north side established at least eight different churches of almost as many denomination affiliations: Ebenezer Lutheran (1895), First Swedish Methodist Episcopal, later Bethany Methodist Episcopal (1909), Edgewater Swedish Baptist (1910), First Swedish Evangelical Free Church (1910), Bethel English Lutheran (1911), Edgewater Evangelical Covenant (c. 1914), and Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran (1922), in addition to a Salvation Army corps that served the Swedish population. With a few exceptions, these congregations erected modest brick churches located on quiet, residential side streets, indicative of the inward looking, contained culture of the north shore Swedish community.

In Uptown, the close of World War I saw the settlement of greater numbers of Jewish people around Lawrence and Wilson Avenues. While wealthy Jews had lived in Edgewater since its founding in the late nineteenth century, they had not organized a formal shul: “Jews in small numbers made their homes here, living scattered and not knowing each other.”²³ In 1918, Jewish residents organized the Sons of Israel, North Shore Hebrew Congregation, and two years later larger contributions made it possible for the congregation to buy a lot on Kenmore Avenue. Around this time, members of the eminent First Hungarian Congregation Agudath Achim synagogue, established in 1884

nineteen-teens Swedes established a dominant residential, commercial, and religious presence. The minister of Summerdale Congregational later recalled how the Swedish influx affected his little “community church”: after 1900, the Swedish membership began leaving the church, “for the Scandinavians very naturally and properly went to their own religious organizations as they were organized. In 1914 then, when the Swedish influx assumed its largest proportions, our little church was nearly in a state of insolvency.” Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 28, 1.

²³ Agudas Achim North Shore Congregation, “The Early History of Agudath Achim North Shore Congregation representing the consolidation of First Hungarian Congregation, ‘Agudath Achim’ North Shore Congregation, ‘Sons of Israel,’” (Chicago: 1927), www.aansc.org/history/index.html, accessed August 17, 2007.

on Chicago's west side, were looking to relocate and contacted the North Shore Sons of Israel about merging the two congregations.²⁴ Many of Agudath Achim's members had already moved to the north shore and, despite class conflicts between the Sons of Israel and the wealthier members of Agudas Achim, leaders succeeded in pulling together the two groups enough to raise \$350,000 for the construction of a massive synagogue designed by architects Dubin and Eisenberg.²⁵ Under construction for more than a year and a half, the Hungarian-influenced style of the structure expressed the ethnic background of the Agudath Achim congregation. Through the liberal use of stars of David on the façade, it also communicated for the first time an organized and visible Jewish presence in the community.



Figure 58. Agudas Achim, 1927. The members of the Agudas Achim/North Shore Sons of Israel congregation placed this photograph in the Northside Sunday Citizen to announce the completion of their new synagogue. Northside Sunday Citizen.

With the emergence of new religious groups on the landscape, a wide spectrum of religious diversity could sometimes be found in the span of only a few blocks. In the 1920's, Greeks moved to the north shore in large numbers, and in 1926 this community erected St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Edgewater at Hollywood and Winthrop,

²⁴ According to the formal history of the Agudas Achim congregation, "when the [west side] building was erected, Marshfield and Polk was considered a most desirable neighborhood, [but] it gradually changed its atmosphere and the members began to move out." Most likely this "change in atmosphere" was the settlement of increasing numbers of African Americans on the near west side during the Great Migration. Ibid.

²⁵ "Agudath Achim Temple Opens Today," *North Side Sunday Citizen*, February 27, 1927, 1.

a block from both the Church of the Atonement and the Seventh Church of Christ Scientist. Meanwhile, historically Anglo churches embarked on mission programs geared toward ethnic groups, provided additional evidence of a growing diversity of residents in Uptown and Ravenswood. For example, the North Shore Baptist Church organized a Chinese mission school, teaching English and the Bible to more than a hundred Chinese people, an effort that eventually spawned the North Shore Chinese Baptist Church.²⁶ By the end of the 1920's, the religious and ethnic diversity of a cosmopolitan urban center had supplanted the homogenous Anglo-Protestant religious landscape of the early north shore suburbs.

The Theory of Religious Markets: "Alive to modern methods in advertising"

The modern city—with its powerful commercial culture and pluralist impulse—created a dynamic context for churches that was far removed from the small town ideal of American Protestantism. As a result, through much of the twentieth century the predominant historical narrative of urban religion in the United States was one of declension: “For many years scholars believed that the modern American city—diverse, cosmopolitan, and commercial—was inhospitable to religion.”²⁷ Such perspectives drew from and reinforced the secularization thesis, famously advanced by Karl Marx, Sigmund

²⁶ “North Shore Baptist Church,” *Northside Sunday Citizen*, August 15, 1926; 1993 Fall Tour of Homes, “5244,” Edgewater Historical Society, <http://www.edgewaterhistory.org/tour930919/index.html?1.html> (accessed January 13, 2010).

²⁷ Diane Winston, *Red-Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of the Salvation Army* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1. On the traditional connection of Protestantism with small town values and a rural mystique, see James W. Lewis, *The Protestant Experience in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1975: At Home in the City* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 2; Robert Orsi, *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), ix.

Freud, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim, which maintained that religious pluralism—with its cacophony of contrasting worldviews—would lead to widespread skepticism about any single claims to ultimate truth and an eventual falling away from religion.

Recently, however, scholars have argued that urbanization, rather than fundamentally overthrowing religious devotion and practice, instead effected a profound transformation of it. An alternative “theory of religious markets” posits that the religious pluralism inherent in the urban environment promotes vigorous competition between denominations and even individual churches: “Religious economies are like commercial economies in that they consist of a market made up of a set of current and potential customers and a set of firms seeking to serve that market.”²⁸ According to the theory of religious markets, while some churches may win and some churches may lose, competition between churches promotes the dynamism and health of the entire religious marketplace.

From this perspective, the effect of the commercial marketplace on urban churches was not monolithic. Commercial culture both weakened the authority of churches and provided them with the tools to confront new challenges. As John Giggie and Diane Winston observe, “[in a modernized, rationalized, and urbanized society] religion thrives not by avoiding the hallmarks of urban capitalism but by selectively

²⁸ Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 9. See also Lawrence R. Iannaccone, “Voodoo Economics? Reviewing the Rational Choice Approach to Religion,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34, no. 1 (1995): 76-88. For criticisms of the theory of religious markets, see Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 95-102.

appropriating aspects of it and nurturing a range of new spiritual identities.”²⁹ Laurence Moore has gone so far as to state, “what we usually mean by speaking of secularization has to do not with the disappearance of religion but its commodification.”³⁰

Certainly, there was a self-conscious aspect to this integration of commercial values into religious enterprise. In 1912, Shailer Mathews, a prominent modernist theologian and dean of the University of Chicago Divinity School, published a book entitled *Scientific Management in the Churches*. In it, Mathews advised church leaders to make “the church something of a business establishment.”³¹ Such thinking was particularly popular among liberal Protestants. As the advertising profession solidified itself as a science in the business world, Protestant leaders in the United States began appropriating the methods of advertising and publicity for the promotion of churches and Christianity in general. Manuals with titles like *Principles of Successful Church Advertising*, *Church Publicity: The Modern Way to Compel Them to Come In*, and *Handbook of Church Advertising* became popular among forward-looking clergy. Such manuals provided advice on memorable church slogans, ways to get church activities into the newspaper, and methods of reaching untapped markets of customers.³²

²⁹ John Michael Giggie and Diane H. Winston, *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 2.

³⁰ R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5. See pp. 213-218 for a more detailed description of the move toward religious advertising in the nineteen-teens and nineteen-twenties.

³¹ Shailer Mathews, *Scientific Management in the Churches* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912), 58. A decade later, such thinking would emerge in a more extreme form in Bruce Barton’s best seller *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1925), which recast Jesus himself as “the founder of modern business” in an effort to make the Christian story more attractive and accessible to businessmen.

³² Charles Stelzle, *Principles of Successful Church Advertising* (New York: F.H. Revell Co., 1908); Christian Fichthorne Reisner, *Church Publicity: The Modern Way to Compel Them to Come In*

Proponents of such strategies evinced little anxiety that the spectacle of advertising and promotions would dilute or sully the Christian message. Christian F. Reisner, author of *Church Publicity*, asked his readers: “Shall we allow commercial institutions to forge ahead while the church, with any kind of excuse, lags behind? Jesus did not permit his cause to be buried. He drove out temple thieves, preached from a boat, and fed the five thousand so that they could comprehend further preaching in an outdoor service.”³³ Many ministers, particularly in urban areas, embraced advertising wholeheartedly because it promised an upsurge in church membership numbers. *Printers’ Ink*, a trade publication for the advertising business, remarked on ministers who supposed that “the science of advertising could blow the breath of life into church attendance even as it had into laundry soap.”³⁴

In Uptown and Edgewater, models from the commercial sphere had a discernable effect on the ways that religion manifested itself in public space after 1910. Chapter Four described how ambitious church building programs and electric church signage were inspired in part by the scale and elaborate ornamentation of urban commercial structures like movie theaters and ballrooms. But north shore churches also inserted themselves into public life through advertising and spectacle. As Laurence Moore observes of the church advertising movement, “The crucial thing was to get people’s attention, to spark their curiosity so that they would try church, like a brand of soap.”³⁵

(New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1913); Francis H. Case, *Handbook of Church Advertising* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1921).

³³ Reisner, 1.

³⁴ James E. Darst, “Selling Scripture in the Street Cars,” *Printers’ Ink* 108, no. 9 (1919): 86.

³⁵ Moore, 215.

Only weeks after the climax of the 1911 “beach war,” the Reverend James Ainslie took advantage of North Shore Congregational’s location at Wilson and Sheridan to bring the church to the attention of Sunday beach-goers. Part revivalist, part street salesman, Ainslie conducted his regular Sunday evening service from the front steps of the church, while crowds streamed past, to and from the beach a block away. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* described the scene:

Scores of night bathers on their way to the beach or just out of the water halted in front of the church and listened to the sermon and the singing. It was a shirt waisted and straw hatted throng, many of the men smoking cigars and cigarets [sic] while the minister preached....Hundreds of automobiles passed by while the religious services were in full swing, and many turned up to the curb and interrupted their evening spin by listening to the sermon.³⁶

After onlookers joined in the singing of old hymns, Ainslie appealed to his audience with a sales pitch for his product. Christianity was not a straitjacket, he maintained: “There are a great many men and women now-a-days who think they cannot have a good time and be Christians....We are having a fine time right now, and I don’t believe that any of you will feel that the few moments spent in hearing these fine old hymns sung and the few words I have spoken are wasted.”³⁷ This episode emphasized many of the strategies behind church advertising: going to the customer instead of waiting for the customer to come to church, highlighting the positive aspects of the Christian “product,” creating a religious spectacle to spark the curiosity of the passerby.

Church manuals also stressed the importance of a memorable slogan. The Reverend Henry Hepburn tried to emphasize the welcome that new worshippers would

³⁶ “Sermon on Steps: Bathers Listen,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 10, 1911, 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

receive at Buena Memorial by calling it “The Church of the Open Palm.” By encouraging the boys of the church to display their affiliation with Buena Memorial by holding up their palms in greeting to one another when they passed on the public street, Hepburn expanded this slogan into public performance. He theorized that this practice would provide opportunities to explain its meaning to curious outsiders: “When a boy holds up the open palm his companion, who has not seen the practice, asks ‘What does this mean?’ The church boy then replies, ‘O, that means we like to have people come to our church and we are ready to give all who come the open palm.’”³⁸ Other churches branded themselves in different ways, often with monikers that emphasized physical attributes of the church or its location. As Chapter Four has described, Ravenswood Congregational took to calling itself “The Church of the Lighted Cross,” while Buena Presbyterian also gained the nickname, “The Great Church at the Crossroads.” Ravenswood Presbyterian Church advertised itself as “Sunshine Corner” and St. Simon’s Episcopal came to be known as “The Little Church Around the Corner.”³⁹

Churches also appropriated longstanding print advertising techniques.⁴⁰ Outdoor signage became increasingly important as the streetscapes of the north shore became crowded with competing visual messages. Newspaper advertisements also increased; a large number of north shore churches ran weekly notices for upcoming sermons and

³⁸ “Church of the Open Palm,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 14, 1914, 8.

³⁹ Frank L. Stevenson, *Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Chicago, 1902-1937: A Story of the Church* (Chicago: Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Historical Committee, 1939), 11.

⁴⁰ According to Stephan Fox, print is the oldest form of advertising: “For centuries, ever since its most rudimentary beginnings, advertising had appeared in three basic formats: handbills and circulars, outdoor signs...and (especially) newspapers.” Stephan R. Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 28.

holiday services in both the local *Northside Sunday Citizen* and the Chicago daily newspapers. Some churches utilized handbills, an old advertising technique, for special promotions. In 1915, Edgewater Presbyterian distributed 5,000 handbills printed with an invitation to all north shore residents: “The saloons are closed on Sunday, but the Edgewater Presbyterian church will be open all day. Refreshments, hot chocolate, and sandwiches, for the thirsty are to be served.”⁴¹ The boys of the church brought these handbills to nearby apartment buildings, while the elders and men of the church spread out to area saloons.

Occasionally, churches mimicked the novelty and spectacle of commercial publicity stunts. In 1919, North Shore Baptist in Uptown initiated “a vigorous campaign to bring the church to the attention of every resident of the neighborhood.”⁴² As part of this campaign, the church hired an airplane to drop paper stars over the entire north shore. These “messages from heaven” bore the message “Get right with God--Judgment is coming—He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”⁴³ The pastor, Rev. W.H. Jones, explained that “the falling stars were used as one means of letting people know that the church is alive to modern methods in advertising....we do want to reach as many of



Figure 59. Newspaper publicity for the North Shore Baptist Church airplane drop. Here, revival preacher William Holderby is pictured with a sample star. *Chicago Daily Tribune*.

⁴¹ “If Thirsty, Go to Church,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 8, 1915, 4.

⁴² “Up to Date,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 24, 1919, 9.

⁴³ “Church Flyer to Drop ‘Heavenly Messages’,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1919, 13.

the people of our community as possible and to let them know that we are here and that we have a message and a mission.”⁴⁴

In a crowded religious market that also competed with the lure of secular amusements for people’s time and attention, the effort to “let them know that we are here” became an increasingly critical element of church survival in the nineteen-teens. While the pluralism of the urban environment created stresses for many small churches, it prompted others to increase their visibility in the public sphere. By creating marketing campaigns and sponsoring spectacles, churches appropriated space in print media and the public street to draw attention to their missions and their messages.

The side effect of marketing campaigns was a cacophony of missions and messages in the religious marketplace. Thinking of church as a business put the churchgoer in the position of a consumer, empowered by personal choice to select the most meaningful or rewarding church experience. Meanwhile, each church offered a product, tailored to its intended consumers. In a geographic area crowded with a diverse set of church communities, such a mindset had the effect of fracturing any clear place identity linked to religion.

Fracturing the Link Between Church and Geography

A number of factors had sustained the early link between a church and its geographical surroundings. In a middle-class community like late-nineteenth century Ravenswood, church attendance had been a community habit, reinforced as part of a whole menu of social identity markers. Such common identifications were reinforced by

⁴⁴ “Up to Date,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 24, 1919, 9.

the fact that, until the turn of the twentieth century, most Protestants shared a uniform set of evangelical values. Furthermore, in an isolated community with limited transportation options, constraints of mobility dictated that members attend a church located within walking distance. These conditions made possible the kind of non-sectarian union church at the center of religious, social, and civic life embodied by Ravenswood Congregational in Chapter One. By the nineteen-teens, however, these conditions had broken down. Sustaining a church with a congregation drawn only from the immediate neighborhood of a church became increasingly difficult.

Rather than being a community habit, church attendance was seen more and more a personal choice influenced by market conditions. The anonymity afforded by modern city life alleviated social pressures toward church attendance from one's neighbors, allowing urban residents the freedom to select from a wide menu of options, including non-attendance at religious services. Even among those who chose to attend church, the rising diversity of religious options within a narrow geographical space allowed for greater choice than had been available in the nineteenth century. For self-identified Protestants, after 1900 the options offered within the sphere of Protestantism expanded dramatically. The rise of modernist and fundamentalist theologies in the denominations and new religions like Christian Science outside of them allowed for an expanded range of Christian belief and expression.

In the long term, the most potent force in fracturing the paradigm of the geographically central community church was an increase in the number of transportation technologies available to ordinary people. While streetcars had allowed people to move from neighborhood to neighborhood with relative ease, the popularization of automobile

ownership allowed for unprecedented mobility and personal choice in the selection of a church community. Across the United States, clergy lamented that for many automobile owners Sunday became an opportunity for leisure drives: “Rumors, apparently well founded, have credited Sunday motoring with being as potent a factor as Sunday golfing in cutting down church attendance.”⁴⁵ Many city ministers concurred that urban church attendance declined precipitously in the summertime, when people preferred motoring in the countryside to sitting in sweltering church auditoriums.

Critics claimed that automobiles contributed to the decline of church attendance, but in many cases it simply transformed the nature of it. The automobile allowed for a wider range of religious choice: “Observers cited the automobile as the cause of an increase in church attendance; urban and rural residents were willing to drive ‘that extra mile’ for the church service of their choice.”⁴⁶ The automobile played a special role in shifting church attendance from rural, outlying churches to larger city churches that could expend money on impressive services and charismatic pastors: “a great many [rural families] chose to abandon their small community churches in favor of larger, better-funded town churches.”⁴⁷

By the late nineteen-teens, attending church by car became a widespread habit on the north shore. In the summer of 1919, eight Ravenswood and Uptown churches—

⁴⁵ “Where the Car Has Helped the Church,” *The Literary Digest* 70, no. 3 (1921): 52.

⁴⁶ Alexis McCrossen, *Holy Day, Holiday: The American Sunday* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 92. McCrossen observes that the availability of places to go and means to get there after 1850 created “the collapse of the distinction between rest and leisure,” a portentous development for those who championed Sabbath observance. *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Kevin Hillstrom and Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *The Industrial Revolution in America: Automobiles* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 179.

Ravenswood Methodist Episcopal, Ravenswood Presbyterian, Ravenswood Congregational, Ravenswood Baptist, All Saints Episcopal, St. Simon's Episcopal, North Shore Christian, and Bethany Evangelical Lutheran—held special automobile church services during the months of July and August. Organizers received permission to shut down Wilson Avenue for these services and warned attendees: “Parking privileges will be given automobiles within hearing distance of the speakers.”⁴⁸ While these outdoor services responded to the nuisance of stuffy church auditoriums in an age before air conditioning, they also illustrate the increasing centrality of automobile travel among church members and the efforts that churches made to retain these members.

All of these factors expanded and intensified the diversification of the religious marketplace and its increasing disassociation from geography. As sociologist Louis Wirth has observed, in the modern city, when “the territorial unit [disappears] as a basis of social solidarity, we create interest units.”⁴⁹ The same process can be traced in the neighborhoods of the north shore. With the landscape of the north shore accommodating a greater diversity of religious groups, these groups became to some degree segregated interest units that shared the same space. Churches adapted to this situation by finding distinct religious niches that appealed to different sets of people. These contrasting religious beliefs made north shore neighborhoods contested terrain among churches that had very different views of moral geography, transforming the religious world of the north shore into “a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “Hear the Gospel from Your Auto in Ravenswood,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1919, 23.

⁴⁹ Wirth, 33.

⁵⁰ Robert Park, “The City,” in *Cities and Churches: Readings on the Urban Church*, Robert Lee, ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 49.

The complexity of this patchwork moral geography is best illustrated by two churches that anchored primary intersections of the north shore in the 1920's. At the Pantheon Theater on Sheridan Road, and later in its own building at the corner of Lawrence and Sheridan, the People's Church was a bastion of liberal, modernist religion under its charismatic and popular founder, Dr. Preston Bradley. The People's Church energetically embraced its association with Uptown, promoting the district's connections to modernity and commercial culture and going so far as to name its 1926 structure the Uptown Temple, "to emphasize its relationship to that vast and teeming area of Chicago known as Uptown."⁵¹ In contrast, North Shore Congregational at Wilson and Sheridan underwent a drastic transformation after 1916. Under the Reverend J.C. O'Hair, North Shore embraced fundamentalist religious values that anathematized modern urban life and set the church in direct opposition to the worldly atmosphere of Uptown's bright light district. These two churches, so physically close and yet so theologically removed from one another, symbolized the divergent paths of both urban religion and American Protestantism during the fractious decade of the nineteen twenties.

The People's Church: "liberality in all questions of religion"

Preston Bradley, the moving force behind the People's Church, was raised in an observant and traditional Presbyterian household in Linden, Michigan, a small farming town. The preaching of Dwight Moody influenced Bradley as a boy, but by college he

⁵¹ Preston Bradley, *Along the Way: An Autobiography* (New York: David MacKay, 1962), 230. In his diary the evening of the meeting at which the name was chosen, Bradley wrote, "Also voted to call the building 'the Uptown Temple.' I am very happy over this. I think it a distinctive euphonious name with more character than merely building another church." Preston Bradley, 1925 Diary, Wednesday, Jan. 28, 28. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 18.

had become disillusioned with strict revivalist Christianity. In a 1907 diary entry, he noted, “My mission is to do good and not be hampered by any church, race, creed, or anything else.”⁵² After his ordination in 1911, the twenty-three year old

Bradley took a position at the Church of Providence, a small Presbyterian church in



Figure 60. Preston Bradley in his study, 1925. From a Chautauqua lecture circuit brochure. Compass Rose Cultural Crossroads.

Chicago’s Lake View neighborhood. Very early on, it became clear to his congregation that their new pastor was unconcerned with theological orthodoxy. Dissatisfied members charged Bradley with heresy in the Chicago Presbytery, but the case never reached trial because the young minister willingly admitted the unorthodoxy of his theological positions and resigned from the Presbyterian denomination. Later, Bradley characterized himself as an unrepentant heretic: “I have always tried to think for myself...I could accept no authority except those of my own mind and my own conscience and my own heart.”⁵³

The opportunities presented in the ferment and diversity of the modern urban environment enabled and encouraged such independence of mind. Furthermore, the rising detachment of church membership from geography gave the young preacher hope that his unorthodox message might reach like-minded urbanites scattered across the city. Bradley formed an independent “People’s Church,” the mission of which he defined as the propagation of religion enlightened by knowledge, guided by reason, and animated by

⁵² Bradley, 86.

⁵³ Ibid., 115, 117.

good will: “a church that stood for liberality in all questions of religion and with no narrow sectarian or theological appeal.”⁵⁴ While Bradley characterized the church as Christian, he professed no interest in the question of Christ’s divinity: “I believe that Jesus lived. I believe that he was born as other men have been born. I believe that he gave a great message to the world. I believe it is a message without which this world cannot properly live....The other and more commonly promoted aspect of Jesus does not concern me.”⁵⁵ Even during this early period, the force of Bradley’s charismatic personality was evident: eighty-six of the Church of Providence’s one hundred members resigned from the Presbyterian denomination with Bradley to join the People’s Church.

For the first few months, the People’s Church met in a succession of public halls, but as word of Bradley’s preaching spread, the church began to grow.⁵⁶ In a testament to the increasing distances people began traveling to attend the church services of their choice, the *Chicago Evening Post* reported: “people began to come from the outer confines of the city to hear his sermons.”⁵⁷ In 1913, Bradley accepted the offer of opening his church in the Wilson Avenue Theater, which seated 900, and the church moved to Uptown. The location proved fruitful. In 1918, bolstered by attendance from both within and outside of the Uptown community, the People’s Church moved to the

⁵⁴ Building Program. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 163. At first, Bradley named his new church the “Peoples Progressive Church of Chicago,” but the church soon dropped “Progressive” to avoid political associations.

⁵⁵ Bradley, 118-119.

⁵⁶ The first meeting of the People’s Church took place at the Viking Temple, a small public hall on Sheffield Avenue. After only a month, the church required more room so it moved its services to Arcola Hall on Clark Street.

⁵⁷ “Society Leader Opens Her Home for Church Use,” *Chicago Evening Post*, Feb. 28, 1914. Preston Bradley papers, III, folder 152.

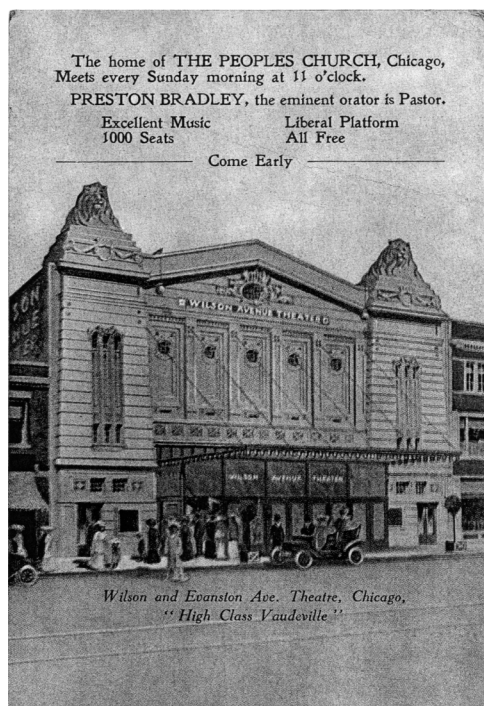


Figure 61. Card advertising the Peoples Church at the Wilson Avenue Theater, c. 1913. Note the fine print at the bottom, a plug for "High Class Vaudeville" at the same theater. Preston Bradley papers, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Pantheon Theater, the new moving picture theater on Sheridan Road that accommodated 3,000. Bradley held his first standing-room-only service at the Pantheon the day after the theater's dedication, and he packed the auditorium each Sunday for the next eight years.

The success of the People's Church owed much to its location in the center of one of the most modern, forward-looking neighborhoods in the city. Preston Bradley preached a religion set firmly in the issues and realities of daily life and stressed its relevance to the problems of modern life. He wrote, "I have

always tried to apply religion to the contemporary scene. I do not think much of talking about what may happen after death or a thousand years hence. We live today. Religion, to be meaningful, must apply to present problems, to this part of life."⁵⁸ Bradley often preached and spoke on the modern condition, debating Arthur M. Lewis in the affirmative on the question "Can a Modern Man be a Christian?" at the Garrick Theater downtown and preaching in his own church on such topics as "The Modernist – An Atheist or an Idolator" and "Modern Man and His God."⁵⁹ The *Chicago Defender*

⁵⁸ Bradley, 40.

⁵⁹ Preston Bradley, 1924 Diary, Sat., Jan. 5, 5. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 18; Preston Bradley, 1924 Diary, Sun., Jan. 13, 13. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 18.

reported approvingly, “His texts are often chosen not out of the Holy Scriptures, but out of the cold, raw facts of modern life.”⁶⁰

The church’s success also depended on Bradley’s compelling speaking and performance style, which he honed with painstaking care. In the early years of his ministry, Bradley took advantage of the north shore’s density and diversity of churches to observe other preachers at work. He was often disappointed: “In a church which is almost the geographical center of the great population of Uptown Chicago, there were only about two hundred and fifty people gathered, while, at the very hour we were there, probably ten thousand people were sitting in the theaters within a radius of a few blocks.”⁶¹ The young minister observed the tendency of many church leaders to blame modern culture for this predicament: “I know what the preachers say about this. They cry, ‘This is a godless generation, given over to amusement and pleasure.’ They will think of every reason they possibly can to shift the responsibility onto the public.”⁶² Instead, Bradley blamed preachers for dry and uninspiring sermons that did little to compete with the attractions of the theater and other commercial amusements.

Bradley felt strongly that popular religion should utilize the theatricality present on the landscape of neighborhoods like Uptown. In a 1914 lecture, Bradley “pointed to filled theatres and empty churches and declared that the theatre had much to give to life and its aid should not be spurned.”⁶³ He later observed, “There’s a little bit of the actor in

⁶⁰ “Dr. Preston Bradley,” *Chicago Defender*, September 18, 1962, 12.

⁶¹ Bradley, 205.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ “Gary Steel to be Forgotten,” *Gary Tribune*, Feb. 26, 1914. Preston Bradley papers, folder 152.

every preacher, of course....I do put on a show. Why not, if that is what it takes for a preacher to get across the ideas that he believes are important.”⁶⁴ Bradley attempted make his performances memorable, whether in his church on Sundays or through an exhausting schedule of performances on the Chautauqua lecture circuit, by which he supplemented his small ministerial salary and fine-tuned his speaking style. In 1916, one newspaper attested to the results in a review of Bradley’s lecture:

There was a personality on the rostrum last night—a personality with nerve and lots of it, a personality intense, dynamic, magnetic. To say that Preston Bradley electrified, delighted, amused, amazed, refreshed and inspired his audience would ordinarily classify this review as the effort of a subsidized, mentally subnormalized, unbalanced liar. But ask anyone who was there last night, and that person will tell you that Preston Bradley accomplished those seeming miracles, and did the same with ease and grace.⁶⁵

In Chicago, a church member compared a Sunday service at the People’s Church to theatrical experience, wondering “Why do people pay from \$2.00 to \$5.00 or even \$10.00 for tickets to musical concerts or theatrical shows? But for your Sermon only from 10 cents to 25 cents. With out any flattering I must say that your sermon is worth from \$5.00 to \$10.00 admission.”⁶⁶

Finally, the People’s Church succeeded because—like a profitable business—it filled an opening in the marketplace: it was an unapologetically liberal church that invited every kind of unorthodox thinker. Letters to Bradley from the 1920’s show that many

⁶⁴ Bradley, 39. Much later, Bradley observed that the most successful evangelists had always been showmen: Dwight Moody, Billy Sunday, Aimee Semple MacPherson. The danger, he cautioned, was to be carried away by showmanship, as Semple MacPherson had been, or sensationalism, which Bradley believed buoyed the career of revivalist preachers like Sunday: “[Sunday’s] theology, if it may be called that, was so archaic, so steeped in fear and childish fantasies, that is was positively immoral.” *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶⁵ “Bradley Praises Wilson,” c. 1915-1916? Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 152.

⁶⁶ Letter, January 17, 1921, from Joseph Adler to Preston Bradley. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 55. The letter, from a Jewish admirer, also asks that Bradley “Kindly advise me your opinion about Hebrew reformed teaching,” a testament to the broad diversity of the audience which Bradley was reaching.

people attracted to the People's Church had previously turned away from religion altogether. These people experienced the joy of finding their views reinforced in a religious setting. One writer explained:

Being of an extremely liberal turn of mind and having a natural dislike for pomp and display, I have not found any response in the different churches I have attended once in a while through curiosity. Figuring deaths, etc. I assume I have entered orthodox churches of various sects probably only six times in twenty years. Last September I saw your amiable countenance displayed on the exterior, and entered the Pantheon theater. Your thoughts as expressed interested me to such an extent that I have not missed one Sunday since.⁶⁷

The People's Church also welcomed whomever expressed interest in attending. The church was—at least nominally—racially integrated from its inception and it attracted members from across the religious and ethnic spectrum. One woman wrote to Bradley in 1921: “Tho I am a Jew, I seldom attend my own church, due to financial reasons, but I frequently attend yours and come away with a deep feeling of gratitude that I am allowed [to be] religious without being compelled to pay a price beyond the reach of my purse.”⁶⁸

Working within the context of urban commercialism and ethnic and religious diversity, Bradley situated his own mission as a response to the stresses of modern life and city living: “In my view, the preacher's job is not to save souls, but to help people to save themselves from frustration, from spiritual defeat, from the desperation of loneliness born of sense of unworthiness or a sense of defeat in life.”⁶⁹ He further observed, “The life in a great city is exacting and wearing. The people will not come if they are not

⁶⁷ Letter, January 14, 1922, from H.B. Harris (4719 N. Magnolia) to Preston Bradley. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 56.

⁶⁸ Letter, March 6, 1921, Mrs. Lena H. Dutch to PB. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 55.

⁶⁹ Bradley, 76.

helped to meet their problems.”⁷⁰ Bradley’s theology allowed his listeners to embrace an identity that encompassed both modern, rational thinking and religious belief, an attractive option for residents of Uptown and other urbanites who embraced modern culture yet longed for a spiritual home.

North Shore Church: “a place for the message of God”

At the same time that Preston Bradley’s star ascended in Uptown, just down Sheridan Road the North Shore Congregational Church underwent a gradual yet marked transformation. The church, which had anchored the public response of north shore churches during the aftermath of the Bessie Hollister murder and the beach wars, experienced years of turmoil in the face of the north shore’s transition from quiet suburbs to pulsing urban center.⁷¹ In the nineteen-teens, church membership declined and some members blamed longtime pastor James Ainslie. The clergyman protested, “I am doing just as efficient work here as I ever did. More new members are being received every year, but because the character of this neighborhood is changing we have been losing an average of forty-six members a year for the last five years... This under the circumstances is inevitable.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Preston Bradley, 1926 Diary, Tues., Aug. 17, 229. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 18.

⁷¹ There had been signs of tension on the North Shore for quite some time. The Reverend Ingram Bill, for all his sensationalist rhetoric about the modern city in the beach war and other controversies, lost his pulpit at North Shore Baptist at the end of 1912, after only four years, because members of his congregation objected to his “progressive” political views. A committee of deacons asked him to resign after he “infus[ed]...progressive ideas into his church work” and supported Theodore Roosevelt in a debate for the church’s Men’s Club. “Pastor Bill Gets Call to Missouri,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 18, 1912, 4; “Bill Uses Creed of Armageddon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 11, 1912, 8.

⁷² “Ainslie Upheld By Congregation; Vote 120 to 96,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 16, 1915, 1.

Such explanations did little to pacify Ainslie's opponents within the church, who felt that the pastor had not done enough to distinguish the church in its new environment: "The objection to Dr. Ainslie is simply he is not a big enough man for this church.... While the population has nearly doubled in the last few years the church has steadily lost ground."⁷³ Detractors charged that Ainslie had "outlived his usefulness" and church trustees began looking for a new location for the church.⁷⁴ As acrimony mounted on both sides, Ainslie resigned. A bloc of Ainslie's supporters left North Shore Congregational with him, and in 1916 this group started a new, eminently urban church, the Argyle Community Church, which—like the People's Church—met each Sunday morning in a rented movie theater.

Objections to Ainslie's work had been rooted in another, deeper controversy within the North Shore Congregational congregation. With the neighborhood around the church dedicated to serving hedonistic desires, a faction of the church reacted by taking a trenchantly conservative religious position. In 1919, some members of the church accused the new pastor, Paul Riley Allen, of leading the church toward a withdrawal from the Congregational denomination. Rev. Allen's supporters in the church justified his actions: "It is well known...many of the Congregational churches in the east went over to Unitarianism. This same tendency is now manifest in the west. We invited Mr. Allen to become our pastor because we believe him to be sound in the evangelical faith."⁷⁵ The

⁷³ "Dr. J.S. Ainslie Willing to Quit Only if Pushed," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 13, 1915, 13.

⁷⁴ "Doom Dr. Ainslie Despite \$100,000," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 23, 1915, 13.

⁷⁵ Rev. W.B. Norton, "Pastor's Foes at North Shore Church Fight On," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 10, 1919, 10.

church's wealthiest official, A.M. Johnson—a businessman who became born again at the Moody Tabernacle in 1915—threatened to withhold financial support if the congregation dismissed Allen.⁷⁶ Ultimately, Johnson's faction prevailed, Allen remained, and support for North Shore Congregational's conservative religious stance solidified.

By 1923, Rev. Allen had departed. That summer, Arkansas native J.C. O'Hair held several revivals at the church. These revivals were so successful that the congregation prevailed on O'Hair to become their full-time pastor. Born a Roman Catholic, Rev. O'Hair had for much of his life engaged in the lumber and construction business. Under the influence of his wife he became born-again in 1899, but it was not until 1917 that O'Hair decided to devote himself to full-time evangelistic ministry.⁷⁷ Like Preston Bradley, O'Hair was ordained as a Presbyterian minister, but by the time he arrived at North Shore Congregational, he too had parted ways with the denomination—only in the opposite direction.

Where Bradley identified as a liberal and a religious modernist, O'Hair was an ardent fundamentalist and one of the main exponents of ultra-dispensationalism, a fringe

⁷⁶ An eccentric character, A.M. Johnson later bankrolled the ministry of Paul Rader, a nationally known religious personality and the pastor at Moody from 1915 to 1921. In 1922, Rader built a steel-framed tent at Clark, Halsted, and Barry for a summer of revivals, which were so successful he decided to start the more permanent Chicago Gospel Tabernacle at the site. Rader broadcast a successful radio ministry from the Tabernacle from 1922, and his preaching style, aggressiveness, charisma, entrepreneurship, and eager use of new means of communication influenced a host of later evangelical leaders: "He was the first significant independent fundamentalist Christian broadcaster who depended on his listeners for the financial means to buy airtime." Larry Eskridge, "History—Paul Rader, 1920's Evangelist," <http://www.villageoftowerlakes.com/history/Rader/rader.htm>, accessed Sept. 29, 2009. Johnson lost his fortune in the Great Depression, and Rader's career declined as a result.

⁷⁷ Richard Jordan, *Gracelifer*, <http://gracelifer.blogspot.com/2008/01/here-i-raise-my-ebenezer.html>, accessed October 27, 2008.

theology based on “right division” of the Bible.⁷⁸ Buttressing his worldview was the dogma of Biblical inerrancy. In O’Hair’s words: “Of course the only genuine Christian is a ‘Bible’ Christian. Every genuine Christian believes that the Bible is the Word of God; that all Scripture is God-breathed; that all the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is God’s own inspired Word and every page, paragraph, line and word is for the Christian.”⁷⁹ The rigidity of O’Hair’s ultra-dispensationalist beliefs led him to characterize members of Christian churches outside of this circle as “unsaved religious sinners and carnal Christians.”⁸⁰ O’Hair saved his harshest words for Christian modernists, “clever servants of Satan” like Preston Bradley: “you will not doubt that a loveable, cultured, genial, benevolent, kind, moral and religious gentleman or lady can carry on the work of Satan in a Christian pulpit.”⁸¹

Under O’Hair’s leadership, the North Shore Church resigned from the Congregational denomination in protest of the apostasy of its liberal theology, professing

⁷⁸ Fundamentalists, in the context of the period, were “evangelical Christians, close to the traditions of the dominant American revivalist establishment of the nineteenth century, who in the twentieth century militantly opposed both modernism in theology and the cultural changes that modernism endorsed.” According to George Marsden, dispensationalist millennialism—of which ultra-dispensationalism was an extreme version—“divided all history into distinct eras or dispensations. The final dispensation would be the ‘millenium’ or one-thousand year personal reign of Christ on earth.” George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4, 5. “The most common form of dispensationalism finds the beginning of the church in Acts 2 with the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost. From the standpoint of Acts 2 dispensationalism two other views seem extreme, or ‘ultra’”: Acts 13 dispensationalists (like O’Hair) and Acts 28 dispensationalists. For more on ultradispensationalism, see G.R. Lewis, “Ultradispensationalism,” BELIEVE Religious Information Source, <http://mb-soft.com/believe/text/ultradis.htm>. Accessed May 4, 2010. See particularly the note at the bottom of the page indicating that since 1950, Acts 13 ultradispensationalism has split into four separate and conflicting interpretations.

⁷⁹ J.C. O’Hair, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It* (Chicago: J.C. O’Hair, 1940’s?), 1.

⁸⁰ J.C. O’Hair, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ* (Chicago: Pastor J.C. O’Hair, 1941), 69.

⁸¹ J.C. O’Hair, *Modernism, Ritualism, Fanaticism* (Chicago: J.C. O’Hair, no date), 6, 5.



Figure 62. The congregation of North Shore Church, c. 1930. J.C. O'Hair is posed by the lectern at right. Berean Bible Society.

instead its identification as an “Undenominational-Fundamental” church.⁸² Like People’s Church, North Shore boasted a congregation drawn from a broad variety of religious backgrounds. A publicity brochure announced that “North Shore Church is undenominational but in it’s [sic] membership are former Methodists, Mennonites, Episcopalians, Swedish Covenant, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Plymouth Brethren, Quakers, Congregationalists, Roman Catholics and Jews.” According to the brochure, however, such divisions mattered little at North Shore: “now we are just sinners saved by grace.”⁸³ O’Hair proved a popular pastor, and North Shore’s membership grew steadily. A photograph in the same brochure shows the pews of the church packed from wall to wall.

At a time when other churches concentrated on building programs, North Shore Church remained in its old 1906 building at Wilson and Sheridan, a heavy Romanesque

⁸² “Broadcasting the Bible Daily,” WPCC Pamphlet, no date, 6.

⁸³ J.C. O’Hair Online Library, “Introduction,” Berean Bible Society, <http://www.bereanbible.society.org/ohair/START.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2010).



Figure 63. The stretch of Wilson Avenue opposite North Shore Church, at left, 1929. Library of Congress.

stone structure built during the suburban period and somewhat out of place among the brightly lit theatres and dive bars that lined Wilson by the nineteen-twenties. North Shore's members professed a deep sense of ambivalence and displacement about their location. In one of his books, O'Hair compared the city of Chicago to Corinth, a "city given over to idolatry and adultery, and sin of every character."⁸⁴ The preacher's place, as O'Hair saw it, was not to embrace the city but to save sinners in the church's immediate vicinity from the excesses of urban life: "I am an old Presbyterian minister, but when I saw the great need in the north part of Chicago where the police sergeant told me there were fifteen hundred kept women within a mile and a half of our station, I saw it was...a place for the message of God."⁸⁵ In the 1920's, the congregation gave visual expression to these feelings of isolation in the Wilson Avenue entertainment district by erecting a tall, electric-lit sign that proclaimed "Christ Died for Our Sins." Each night, this sign

⁸⁴ "Broadcasting the Bible Daily," 5.

⁸⁵ Derek Vaillant, *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 255.

stood like a lonely sentinel among the multitude of other lighted signs and advertisements on the facades of the district's commercial buildings.

At the same time that the church spiritually set itself against its geographical surroundings, North Shore reached out to a much broader field of like-minded individuals through the distribution of mail-order pamphlets, authored by O'Hair himself, that outlined his gospel message and views as to the "right division" of the Bible. Booklets were available for 15, 20 and 25 cents, under such titles as *How to Think Right*, *Bible Truth: What We Believe and Why We Believe It*, and *Modernism, Ritualism, and Fanaticism*. In 1928, the prominence of North Shore Church in the dispersed imaginary community of fundamentalist believers was confirmed when the church hosted the tenth annual meeting of the World Fundamentals Association.⁸⁶

"The Church Invisible": Radio Religion on the North Shore

Preston Bradley at People's Church and J.C. O'Hair at North Shore Church preached diametrically opposed Christian messages week after week and their messages reached vastly disparate groups of listeners. Yet the two churches shared commonalities as well. Both churches embraced a non-denominational identification that welcomed people from a variety of religious backgrounds. Furthermore, the membership of both churches transcended their immediate geographical surroundings, with different ideological sub-communities drawn from beyond the Uptown neighborhood to the space

⁸⁶ "World Fundamental Leaders Here Today for Revival Sessions," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 13, 1928, 26.

of the church. Finally, both churches reached out to scattered populations across the city, state, and region through the mail-order distribution of printed texts.

At the same time that North Shore Church ran a robust mail-order operation for the distribution of O'Hair's tracts, People's Church received regular requests for copies of Bradley's sermons. As a result, the church began printing his sermons weekly and maintained a subscription list for interested parties.⁸⁷ One local admirer thanked Bradley for making printed copies of his sermons available outside the church: "Your up-to-date methods are most fortunate, for they make possible the enjoyment of your talks by two old people who are unable to leave their homes. It is indeed something to be thankful for that an influence such as yours can be felt beyond the portals of your church, through such a medium as your printed pamphlets."⁸⁸

By the early 1920's, these pamphlet ministries began to be overshadowed by a far more powerful means of reaching new and far-flung audiences: radio. The emergence of radio religion in the nineteen-twenties fundamentally altered the traditional relationship of religion and space. In some ways, radio undermined the power of religious leaders and groups, in that it allowed listeners access to whole fields of public discourse and commercial entertainments that had previously remained inaccessible. However, in the same manner that they had integrated the strategies of commercial culture into efforts to

⁸⁷ Such letters unconsciously echoed one another. From traveling salesman Eugene Cosgrove in Helena, Montana, c. 1919-1920.: "Dear Mr. Bradley, I always hear you when I am in Chicago....I want everything you can send me from your pen, and, too, I shall refund cost of same." From J.P. Benson in Karlstad, Minnesota, Dec. 25, 1925: "Understand you have printed issues of your sermons. If so will you please send me copies and I will mail you check." Both, Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 55. From J.M. Johns, Feb. 7, 1922: "I understand that your sermons are published weekly and that same are in printed form. Kindly let me know the price yearly for these sermons." Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 56.

⁸⁸ Letter, January 21, 1922, from H.B. Harris (4719 N. Magnolia) to PB. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 56.

become a part of urban public culture, religious leaders quickly came to appreciate the power of this new media: “Religion, even the kind that bills itself as ‘traditional’ or ‘old-fashioned,’ found a ready place in modern mass media, enhancing and strengthening certain forms of religious behavior and practice.”⁸⁹ As one observer noted, “by the law of compensation the radio came just at a time when two other modern inventions—the automobile and the motion picture—had become important factors in diminishing the congregations in both churches and synagogues all over the land.”⁹⁰ Radio religion, with its integrated elements of entertainment and business, easily supplanted the long tradition of the tent revival in American culture.

While radio technology had existed since just before the turn of the twentieth century, the first commercial radio broadcast did not take place until November 2, 1920, when Westinghouse Electric’s Pittsburgh station, KDKA, broadcast the results of the 1920 presidential election.⁹¹ Only two months elapsed before religion also found its way onto radio. On January 2, 1921, KDKA aired a regular Sunday evening service from Pittsburgh’s Calvary Episcopal Church. The broadcast was an experiment by Westinghouse to test the efficacy of different broadcasting situations outside the studio, with the two Westinghouse technicians dispatched to monitor the handful of microphones—a Catholic and a Jew—dressed in choir robes so as not to distract from the actual service. The Rev. Edwin J. Van Etten, pastor of Calvary Episcopal, later recalled,

⁸⁹ Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Religion, Radio, and Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 5.

⁹⁰ Spencer Miller, Jr., “Radio and Religion,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 177, Radio: The Fifth Estate (Jan., 1935): 136.

⁹¹ Rennay Craats, *History of the 1920’s* (Mankato, Minn.: Weigl Publishers Inc., 2002), 10.

“The whole thing was an experiment and I remember distinctly my own feeling that after all no harm would be done!”⁹² No harm was done; in fact, the first service aired proved so popular that Calvary’s services became a permanent part of KDKA’s broadcasting schedule, with Reverend Van Etten himself becoming one of the first well-known pastors of what he came to call radio’s “unseen congregation.”⁹³

In late 1921, almost a year after the first radio broadcast from Pittsburgh’s Calvary Episcopal, Preston Bradley received a letter from one of his Lyceum circuit contacts notifying him of the creation of a wireless broadcasting station in Chicago by Westinghouse Electric Company and encouraging him to begin broadcasting his sermons: “Get busy and radio your sermons before some other pastor or church ‘beats you to it.’”⁹⁴ At this time, however, Bradley was more focused on raising money to build a permanent church home for the People’s Church than in creating an even more ephemeral radio ministry. In his autobiography, Preston Bradley recalled other concerns that slowed his entry into radio broadcasting: “I am amused at times to recall my first naïve reaction to the then novel idea of church services being broadcast on air....I failed to imagine the possibilities of such an invention....I thought the idea absurd...I did not think [the radio] could bring a church service and preserve its devotional character.”⁹⁵

By 1924, Bradley’s dream of a permanent church had moved closer to becoming a

⁹² Miller, 135.

⁹³ Anthony J. Rudel, *Hello Everybody!: The Dawn of American Radio* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 179.

⁹⁴ Letter, Dec. 22, 1921 from George A. Sloan (the Redpath-Brockway Lyceum Bureau) to Preston Bradley. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 55.

⁹⁵ Bradley, 249-50.

reality, with plans for the Uptown Temple already completed.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, a movement had spread among Bradley's supporters at the People's Church to get his sermons broadcast. One member of the church, A.O. Kraemer, wrote to the famous Edgewater Beach Hotel to encourage that hotel to broadcast Bradley's sermons on its radio station: "I believe that the management of the Edgewater Beach Hotel could render no greater service to the citizens of the United States than by broadcasting these Sunday messages, - where there is an audience of from 2000 to 3000 on every occasion

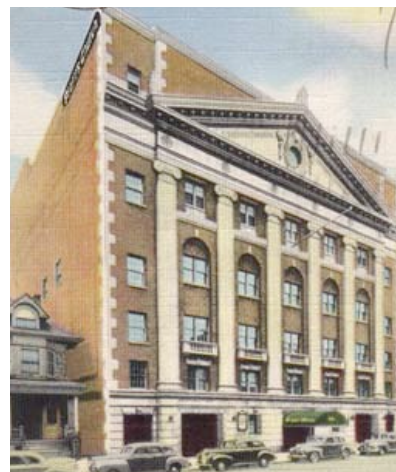


Figure 64. The Uptown Temple, completed in 1926. Designed by architect J.E.O. Pridmore in the Colonial Revival style, this seven-story building boasted an auditorium with a five-story vaulted ceiling that seated more than 1600 people, kitchen and assembly facilities in the basement, and two top floors for rental income. Vintage postcard, Compass Rose Cultural Crossroads.

this man addresses his congregation.”⁹⁷ Bradley finally undertook his first radio broadcast on Sunday, October 5, 1924 on station WQJ, writing in his diary that night, “In preaching I was conscious of the microphones at first, but after warming up to the theme I forgot them entirely.”⁹⁸ Bradley's radio sermons proved almost immediately successful; after eight months of broadcasting, Bradley recorded that “radio has increased our audience a

⁹⁶ The Uptown Temple, with its imposing façade and stately wood-paneled auditorium, looked more like a theater than a church. Bradley's biographer, Daniel Ross Chandler, observed, “The theatrical atmosphere characteristic of motion-picture houses like the Pantheon was extended into the permanent residence for the People's Church.” Daniel Ross Chandler, *The Official, Authorized Biography of the Reverend Dr. Preston Bradley* (Chicago: Exposition Press, 1971), 41. Rather than a pulpit, the stage of the Uptown Temple contained a simple desk, flanked by the busts of Bradley's personal heroes, Abraham Lincoln and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

⁹⁷ Letter, Jan. 23, 1924, A.O. Kraemer to Edgewater Beach Hotel Broadcasting Station. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 60.

⁹⁸ Preston Bradley, 1924 Diary, Sunday, Oct. 5, 279. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 18.

hundred fold.”⁹⁹

Letters began to pour in to the People’s Church from all over the region, testifying to the effect of Bradley’s sermons on daily lives. One man wrote that he had begun to lose his eyesight the year before, “which at the time I considered a great calamity to myself, but I have found that there were many things that I was missing when my eyesight was unimpaired, and among them is the pleasure I have since had in listening to you over the radio.”¹⁰⁰ Another woman wrote, “I can’t tell you how much it has meant to me to be able to hear you.” She characterized herself as “one of the invisible audience that listens to your most helpful sermons. For a long time I have been thinking as you do, but because of my former teachings feared I had no right to do so and was probably all wrong, but since listening to you and hearing the truth as you present it feel that it must be right.”¹⁰¹

Like this woman, many letter writers positioned themselves as part of a larger imaginary community, the invisible audience or the unseen congregation. A farmer living more than two hundred miles from Chicago wrote to let Bradley know that he had been “enjoying some of your sermons by Radio. Trust you are getting many letters to let you know you are heard by thousands unseen.”¹⁰² Some listeners who found the People’s Church broadcasts by chance continued to tune in to be part of this community:

⁹⁹ Preston Bradley, 1925 Diary, Mon., June 15, 166. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 18.

¹⁰⁰ Letter, June 7, 1927, George M. Wisner to Preston Bradley. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 89.

¹⁰¹ Letter, June 6, 1927, Mrs. Josephine Grattilo to Preston Bradley. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 89.

¹⁰² “The Shut Ins and the Shut Outs,” Dedication Program. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 163.

One Sunday I accidentally tuned in my Radio on The People's Church. I listened to your sermon that morning somewhat skeptically, but I liked it. The next Sunday morning I tuned in, but not accidentally this time. I haven't told my friends about it, but I am going to church each Sunday now, in fact my little family gather around the Radio every Sunday and we all go to church and Dr. Preston Bradley is the Pastor of that church.¹⁰³

Bradley himself was deeply moved by the response to his radio broadcasts: "I feel more deeply every week the responsibility of facing that great audience. The radio audience is literally numbered by thousands."¹⁰⁴ The radio audience came to view Bradley as their own pastor and personal friend, which expanded not only the scope of Bradley's message but also his day-to-day workload: "Every week of my life I am preaching funeral sermons for people I have never seen, for families with whom I have never been."¹⁰⁵ Despite these challenges, Bradley attributed the health and steady growth of his church to his weekly radio broadcasts. Even after the People's Church completed the construction of the Uptown Temple in 1926, the radio broadcasts played a crucial role in church growth. Bradley later conceded, "An important factor in the growth of our church has been our use of that modern-day miracle, radio."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid. In 1937, the radio ministry of Preston Bradley would inspire one of his most famous listeners, Irna Phillips, to create the radio soap opera—and later daytime television soap opera—*The Guiding Light*, based around the "guiding light" of the central character, the Revered Dr. John Rutledge. After giving birth to a stillborn baby as a young unmarried woman, Phillips found comfort in listening to Bradley's sermons. Phillips later recalled, "Like many young people I wanted to believe in something.... Although I don't consider myself a religious person, I have never forgotten the underlying theme of Dr. Bradley's approach to religion – the brotherhood of man. I created *The Guiding Light* with this minister and his theme in mind." "Irna Phillips," *Movietome*, <http://www.movietome.com/people/141427/irna-phillips/trivia.html> (accessed June 16, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ Preston Bradley, 1924 Diary, Sat., Nov. 8, 313. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 18.

¹⁰⁵ Preston Bradley, "Some Radio Experiences," *The Liberalist* XIV (September, 1937): 9.

¹⁰⁶ Bradley, 248.

Fundamentalism on the Radio

The same year that the People's Church began broadcasting Bradley's sermons, North Shore Church took over a Sunday transmitter from station WDBY, which allowed the church to broadcast all day long. At first, church members facetiously nicknamed their Sunday station "We Delight in Bothering You," but they soon requested new call letters to distinguish the Sunday station from its commercial counterpart. North Shore received the call letters WPCC, for which they created a series of memorable slogans: "We Preach Christ Crucified. We Praise Christ Continually. We Proclaim Christ's Coming."¹⁰⁷ The station broadcast on Sundays from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm, then from 4pm to midnight, with phone-in request Gospel programs in the evening.¹⁰⁸

J.C. O'Hair was the perfect radio foil to liberal preachers like Preston Bradley. O'Hair was outspoken in his criticisms of commercial amusement culture and the commoditization of music on the radio, and he saw North Shore Church as occupying analogous spaces in the urban geography and on the radio dial. In the Wilson Avenue district, he felt, kept women, gaudy theaters, and dark saloons threatened to drown the city in sin. On the radio, similar forces were at work, with commercial networks

¹⁰⁷ "Broadcasting the Bible Daily," 1.

¹⁰⁸ The WPCC Sunday schedule ran as follows (from "Broadcasting the Bible Daily," unnamed WPCC Pamphlet, 1930's, 1):

- 10:30: International Sunday School Lesson
- 11 to 12:30: Sunday morning worship, singing and O'Hair sermon
- 4:00: Gospel message
- 4:30-5:15: special musical program
- 5:15 – 5:45: thirty minutes request hour
- 5:45-6:45: The Raedeke Brothers, Mrs. Essig, Miss Kelm
- 6:45-7:45: other music and gospel message
- 7:45- 9:30: evening worship
- 9:30-10:15: Sunday Night Request Hour
- 10:15-11:30: Musical Program
- 11:30: Sunday night last message by O'Hair



Figure 65. Rev. O'Hair, at the microphone, with his "radio helpers." From a brochure advertising the radio ministry of North Shore Church. Berean Bible Society.

broadcasting programs of secular depravity: "vaudeville performances, dance hall jazz, advertisements of everything from cigarettes to railroads." With the exception of the WPCC Sunday broadcasts, O'Hair protested, "not one hour is devoted to the broadcast of the most important message that can be heard, and most needed message for this time of distress, for this day of lawlessness and crime, namely the Word of God and high-class religious music."¹⁰⁹ Under O'Hair's direction, the North Shore Church broadcast a program of stern morality. In both real and virtual space, the North Shore message was the same: "Our problem is to get the sinner to hear."¹¹⁰

WPCC saw its mission as taking back the airwaves from profane interests, in part by broadcasting sacred music in addition to O'Hair's fiery sermons. The station asked talented members of its radio congregation to play piano and sing for Gospel programs and solicited contributions between hymns. Listeners were encouraged to sing along at home. O'Hair himself directed their Sunday night "people's choice" program, which played gospel songs requested the previous week by listeners via letters or telephone. A

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Vaillant, 47. Rev. J.C. O'Hair Testimony, Docket 1147, Federal Communications Commissions Archives.

¹¹⁰ "Broadcasting the Bible Daily," 6.

sample request asked:

I wish you would sing “Nothing Between” (on page 45 in *Tabernacle Hymns* No. 3) for Mr. Fred Davies, 859 Belden Ave., and Miss Evelyn Bryant 1200 Webster Ave....I am sure the song will prove a blessing and help to this young couple at this particular time when they seem to have a hard time to give up the shows. They only go once a week, but could and do have such wonderful testimony all but for that one worldly lust.¹¹¹

Like the North Shore Church broadcasters, listeners felt that the combination of secular entertainments, urban space, and worldliness threatened the Christian radio family. One woman wrote in, “In this world of jazz, it is just like a little bit of Heaven to tune into your station.”¹¹² Derek Vaillant observes that during WPCC’s gospel broadcasts, “sacred songs on the radio created a place of grace in a ‘world of jazz,’ whose unstated but implied association with sexual freedom, race mixing, spiritual decay, and crass commercialism extended beyond the airwaves to the city streets.”¹¹³ Just as in real space, the virtual space of radio stimulated competition for cultural authority and social control.

The WPCC broadcasts gave a distinct listening community a feeling of belonging to something greater than themselves, “a shield capable of protecting listeners from the travails and temptations of the outside world.”¹¹⁴ O’Hair recognized that the effectiveness of WPCC radio broadcasts trumped evangelization efforts in real space: “Many are hearing over the radio who are not otherwise hearing....We are daily receiving reports from our radio hearers that bring joy to our hearts and which compensate us for our

¹¹¹ Quoted in Vaillant, 48.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 47.

earnest endeavors.”¹¹⁵ While at the People’s Church the Uptown Temple congregation supported radio broadcasts, at North Shore the cost of maintaining the church and running WPCC fell to the listening public: “More than sixty percent of our total support must come from Christians who are not members of this church-organization.”¹¹⁶

Radio appealed to fundamentalists like those at North Shore for two reasons. It provided them with a public voice to get their sometimes controversial message across and, to some degree, it legitimized their beliefs within the public sphere, elevating their social status in a broader national culture that, into the 1950’s, privileged liberal mainline Protestantism.¹¹⁷ Small churches like North Shore Church no longer had to maintain a large congregation and erect an imposing physical structure to attract attention in the public sphere; all they had to do was start broadcasting their message on the radio. Tona Hangen observes the irony of how new technologies preserved the old Protestant worldviews: “Radio—paradoxically—prevented the decline of old-fashioned religious belief....it does seem high time we acknowledge that without the institutions of modern mass culture religious fundamentalism could not have taken its present shape.”¹¹⁸

Spatial Implications of Radio Ministry

Radio had important implications for the relationship between religion and space. Radio assembled audiences of a previously unimaginable size, giving broadcasters the

¹¹⁵ “Broadcasting the Bible Daily,” 6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ For a deeper discussion of the appeal of radio to evangelicals and fundamentalists, see Quentin J. Schultze, *Christianity and the Mass Media in America: Toward a Democratic Accommodation* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003), 139-174.

¹¹⁸ Hangen, 8.

ability to influence people on a scale that had never before been possible. Like Preston Bradley and J.C. O'Hair, most radio preachers found that radio exponentially multiplied their influence. This effect was particularly attractive to evangelists, for whom geographic space had always presented a challenge. In just four half-hour radio messages, twentieth century evangelist Charles Fuller reached "more living people on this earth than the greatest evangelist of the nineteenth century, D.L. Moody, was able to reach, with long journeys, fatiguing travels, and sometimes three meetings a day, in his entire forty years of Christian service."¹¹⁹

Radio allowed preachers to reach thousands—and later millions—of people at once, but at the same time it allowed for a paradoxically intimate listening experience. It united the speaker and the listener directly; a radio preacher could speak as though he were having a one-on-one conversation with his listeners, instead of shouting at the top of his lungs to a restless crowd packed tightly into a church sanctuary or under a revival tent. Listeners reported feeling that radio sermons felt more like having a personal religious adviser by one's side. As a result, the power of the preacher's personality became a crucial component of a successful radio ministry. A preacher's charisma—or lack thereof—was magnified by the intimacy of the imaginary relationship. One early critic noted, "Personal magnetism is required in preaching of the Word vastly more than in any other form of public speaking."¹²⁰

Certainly, all of these implications sprang from the singular power of radio to transcend physical space: "Radio shrunk distances, collapsing time and space with unseen

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁰ James M. Gillis, "The Radio and Religion," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 2, no. 1, Special Supplement: Public Opinion in a Democracy (1938): 74-75.

power.”¹²¹ Radio collapsed the power of physical geography, uniting listeners instead in an imaginary community.¹²² On the one hand, this imaginary community helped sustain religion in the face of challenges that have previously been discussed: “Radio helped these tribes to forge unified identities across geographic space in the midst of rapid urbanization and industrialization that otherwise challenged and attenuated the role of traditional religious institutions in society.”¹²³ But radio also undermined behaviors rooted in space that had long sustained religious communities. Radio allowed for a diffuse spatial element to religion that had never existed before. It spread the word, but also spread out a congregation so that geographical space no longer bound worshipers together.

To some critics, radio religion spelled the demise of the congregation and of community moralistic oversight. With the advent of radio religion, people no longer needed to cross paths with friends, neighbors, or strangers to receive religious messages. While radio could be a one-way act of delivering consistent religious messages to far-flung listeners and inspiring them to maintain religious faith and behavior, it demanded nothing in return from these listeners and it gave preachers no way to calculate how deeply their messages had been received or feel any but an imagined sense of communion with listeners. Even enthusiastic contemporaries could critique the placelessness of radio:

¹²¹ Hangen, 6.

¹²² An imagined community differs from an actual community in that members do not regularly, and may not ever, actually meet face-to-face. Instead, their connection relies on mental images of imagined affinity. This interpretation borrows from Benedict Anderson’s classic formulation of the nation as an imagined community, as described in *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983).

¹²³ Schultze, 141.

[R]eligion is social. It involves action, reaction, interaction, not only between God and man, but between man and his fellows. Hence the synagoga, the congregatio, both words, Greek and Latin, meaning ‘assembly.’ But in the radio studio there is either no assembly at all or, perhaps worse, a small select group of sightseers, ‘fans.’ No religious emotion can pass from them to the preacher.”¹²⁴

These critics cautioned radio ministers to remember that preaching is a ministry, not just verbal communication: “how can you minister when you don’t see him, and when you know that he is probably lolling half-dressed on a couch, his attention diverted by the family chit-chat or the Sunday supplement?”¹²⁵ In a 1924 sermon, Dr. Edwin Van Etten, whose Pittsburgh church had pioneered radio services, advised his listeners that “radio religion is not a substitute for public worship.”¹²⁶

Radio religion did not become a substitute for public worship, but its success did help transform the nature of religious practice in the United States. With the advent of radio religion, the local church’s powerful role as place maker and arbiter of morality diminished in the face of competing voices from geographically distant places. Instead, influential radio preachers like Aimee Semple McPherson, Father Charles Coughlin, and Billy Sunday had the power to shape people’s experience of religion far beyond their physical reach: “Radio evangelists connected to audiences beyond the immediate locale, thus hastening the nationalization of American folk religion and the involvement of mass media in even those parts of life formerly seen as private and sacred.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Gillis, 75.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 75.

¹²⁶ Miller, 139.

¹²⁷ Hangen, 11.

The nationalization of religious consciousness had a profound effect on the ways that people conceived of moral geography. Before the emergence of the radio and the automobile, the local sphere and local issues dominated most people's worldviews and moral crusades were shaped primarily by the concerns of local churches. As Lizabeth Cohen observes, the popularity of radio created identities, religious and otherwise, that transcended local geography; radio made people "feel part of a larger, citywide and particularly national culture."¹²⁸ In their second study of Middletown, Indiana, in the early 1930's, Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd concur, noting that the emergence of radio network broadcasting in particular carried "people away from localism."¹²⁹ This pulling away from localism meant that moral crusades tended to lose their connection to specific places and local issues, instead taking on larger and more generic dimensions as part of nationalized moral crusades. Over time, this disjunction from localism increasingly resulted in ideological battles over the imaginary spaces of media and culture rather than over concrete moral geographies.

Despite anxieties about the rapid pace of change, by 1931 radio had become an immovable part of American life. That year, for the first time, more than half of American households owned at least one radio.¹³⁰ Four years later, one radio booster could proclaim: "What began fourteen years ago as a small trickle has today become a mighty flood! Not only has 'radio religion' become a fact, but the radio has become one

¹²⁸ Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 330.

¹²⁹ Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), 264.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

of the most significant mediums by which the leaders of the various communions have not only multiplied their voices but also vastly increased their congregations.” But, he cautioned, “There still remains the task of transforming these congregations into a church!”¹³¹ Radio vastly expanded the reach of religion, but in doing so cut the tethers that bound a congregation to the local community, local concerns, and ultimately, the local church.

Conclusion

In 1932, Preston Bradley celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his People’s Church. Leaders from different realms of Chicago’s civic life feted his influence on the city and the nation. One speaker reminded the audience,

My friends, there are no greater contributors to the common weal than those that educate the public and cause them to view the problems of life with clear-sighted understanding. Nor is his elevating influence limited to this city. The general use of the radio has made it country-wide. There must be comparatively few in the nation who have not heard the dynamic sermons of Dr. Bradley on the air.¹³²

Meanwhile, J.C. O’Hair had built up his own ultradispensationalist ministry through prolific writings and the WPCC radio broadcasts. By the 1930’s, the radio programs broadcast by the People’s Church and by North Shore Church had become national in scope. Both programs would continue for decades, with North Shore’s running until O’Hair’s death in 1958 and the People’s Church broadcasts continuing until the late 1960’s.

¹³¹ Spencer Miller, Jr., “Radio and Religion,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 177, Radio: The Fifth Estate (Jan., 1935): 136.

¹³² Note cards from speech delivered at People’s Church 20th Anniversary Banquet. Preston Bradley papers, II, folder 135.

The success of the radio shows at People's Church and North Shore Church sustained the relative health of both churches for three decades, even as the neighborhood around them experienced the first stirrings of a long, slow decline. In 1927, one community booster bragged to an interviewer: "Uptown is as much a pioneer part of Chicago, comparatively, now as it was in 1900, because the outer drive and the extension of Lincoln Park will mean as much to Uptown now as the "L" did in 1900."¹³³ In the short term, the outer drive did provide increased access to the theaters and stores of Uptown, but other events conspired to undermine the dream of continual progress envisioned by Uptown's businessmen. In 1927, the manic pace of construction on the north shore began to slow as speculators turned from real estate to the astonishing returns posted by the stock market. When the bottom fell out of the market on October 23, 1929, the ensuing crash affected the north shore land market severely. The full force of this collapse was not felt until 1931, when the peak north shore real estate values of 1928 completely collapsed. The situation only got worse in 1932, when unemployment and low wages led to lower rents, particularly in the massive apartment buildings in Uptown. The population of the north shore fell at the same time that families doubled up to save costs, leading to unprecedented residential vacancies and a disrupted local economy.¹³⁴ The economic insecurity and physical dislocation of the north shore's residents directly affected the health of north shore churches.

¹³³ Palmer, Uptown I, doc. 43, 3.

¹³⁴ See Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago: The Relationship of the Growth of Chicago to the Rise in its Land Values, 1830-1933* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933), 275ff.

By the early 1930's, Protestant church life on the north shore had become almost unrecognizable from its origins at Ravenswood Congregational. Some churches still functioned as neighborhood churches, but these churches increasingly struggled during the Depression. Many churches felt pressure to move to the suburbs to follow their members. In 1930, the personified "Old Church" of Ravenswood Congregational lamented, "There is talk...of a change. They say I have outlived this old corner of mine, that it is too noisy, too citified, that people are moving away from me, and that I must join the modern march, and move too....[but] I've been on this corner for sixty years...I'd like to stay here a little longer. I'd like to celebrate a hundred years right here..."¹³⁵ While Ravenswood Congregational managed to remain solvent for a few more decades, other churches were not so successful. Tiny St. Simon's, the Episcopal church across the street from the Green Mill in the middle of Uptown, shut its doors for good in 1936.¹³⁶

If urbanization and technology disrupted the old boundary between religion and the commercial world, these forces also disrupted an old spatial model of a church serving a specific geographical area. On the north shore, a multiplicity of faith communities complicated any clear sense of moral geography. Meanwhile, the automobile and suburbanization contributed to the creation of widely dispersed congregations. When members lived close to church, it was a constant presence in their lives; the church community overlapped with the geographic community. As Henry Hepburn of Buena Memorial observed as early as 1928, "Transportation facilities have

¹³⁵ "The Old Church," *The Lighted Cross*, January 1930, 10.

¹³⁶ "St. Simon's Church Made Mission for Deaf Mutes," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 31, 1936, 12.

done away with the church-going distances of old.”¹³⁷ This trend only intensified. Years

later, Preston Bradley observed:

At one time almost everyone who attended The Peoples Church walked to the services. They lived in the immediate neighborhood. That has all changed with the coming of the years and now our congregation comes from all over the City of Chicago and environs. We have people in the church every Sunday from Milwaukee, Elgin, Gary, Joliet and almost every suburban community. Modern transportation has revolutionized church attendance.¹³⁸

Over time, people’s conceptions about the relationship between church and space changed. Thanks to the automobile and radio, old constraints imposed by geography and distance disappeared and church-going more and more became a matter of market-driven personal choice. Church life lost its moorings in a strong sense of place; many church members came to see church as divorced from the overlapping relationships of daily life in a geographically-contained community. This shift to a more atomized vision of community bonds meant that the success of north shore churches depended on attracting congregants, often from dispersed locales. In the 1920’s, supported by consistent population growth and economic prosperity, this model allowed many north churches to expand, but in the face of the suburban exodus of the post World War II period these market pressures came to threaten their very survival.

¹³⁷ “Humanness of One Man Builds Great Church on North Side,” September 16, 1928, 11.

¹³⁸ “Along the Way” (Brief History of Peoples Church”), 1. Preston Bradley papers, III, Box 7.

CONCLUSION

In the 1930's, Frank L. Stevenson looked back on three and a half decades in the life of the Ravenswood Presbyterian Church. A catalog of the contributions of the church on "Sunshine Corner" to the Ravenswood community led Stevenson to meditate on the ephemeral nature of human existence, and he concluded that the church building would serve as a monument to the work done by Ravenswood Presbyterian's members:

About the most fleeting thing with which we come into contact is human life itself. We make our bow, we do our little part—and pass. While the individual may be outstanding, it is not so much the individual, but rather the combined effort of all that counts—all a part in the slow growth of some plan we do not comprehend....In whatever we do of helpfulness it would seem in the greater or in the more humble work of the world—we live on. So stands this church for all of us who have at any time shared in its ministry.¹

For the people who lived and worshipped on the north shore, church structures served not only as buildings with clear functions, but as enduring symbols of their contributions to the life of the community. Such structures grounded both religious and personal experience in material reality in a lasting way.

Yet the place of Protestant churches in the public life of Ravenswood, Edgewater, and Uptown evolved over time along with the communities that surrounded them. The long time pastor of Ravenswood Congregational Church, Dr. J. Morrison Thomas, stated the nature of the overall shift as succinctly as possible: in a relatively short time, the north

¹ Frank L. Stevenson, *Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Chicago, 1902-1937: A Story of the Church* (Chicago: Ravenswood Presbyterian Church Historical Committee, 1939), 56.

shore communities went from being “local home communit[ies] to a part of the great metropolitan life.” Throughout this shift, the contours of the broader landscape and the nature of the cultural mores grounded in that landscape shaped the material manifestations of religion. Churches responded to these outside forces by adjusting their missions and their spaces to new physical environments, creating and re-creating a place for religion on the north shore.

Unraveling and Revision of the Mainline Protestant Landscape

Under the longtime leadership of Dr. Thomas, the Ravenswood Congregational Church remained vital through the nineteen-forties, boasting six hundred members in 1950. By this time, many church families had already moved to the suburbs but, as Dr. Thomas explained, “On Sundays...at least a quarter of the church members who return for services are former Chicagoans who drive in from the suburbs to their old church home.”² Within a few years, however, the continuing migration of church families to the suburbs and a dearth of new members to replace them precipitated a steep decline in the membership of Ravenswood Congregational. In 1955, the church reported only 450 members, and by 1959 the membership had dropped to just over 200.³

An aging and shrinking mainline Protestant population on the north shore spelled changes for all of its Protestant churches. At Ravenswood Congregational, membership losses created mounting financial and institutional stresses for the church, particularly after Dr. Thomas’ retirement in 1957. A succession of short-term pastors arrived with

² “Pastor, Wife Head for Ohio, 50th Wedding,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 25, 1955, N4.

³ “TV Announcer Gives Up Mike for Ministry,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 4, 1959, N5.

high hopes for a revival of the church, but each departed with little success. Submitting his letter of resignation in 1967, the Reverend Raymond Lord exhorted his flock: “There is no question in my mind that our church can and will continue!...Let everyone only speak positive high hopes for our future!”⁴ But only a year later, the new pastor Wilfred Hanson remonstrated with the congregation for “faltering commitments, negativism, and rumors that we are about to close the doors.”⁵

Such rumors proved true. In 1968, just one year short of the congregation’s one-hundredth anniversary, the sixteen elderly members remaining at Ravenswood Congregational Church voted to dissolve the church. Longtime member Frank Huth explained with resignation, “Changing times and a changing community have resulted in the closing of the church.”⁶ Huth, a member from his youth, recalled with emotion the old days of Ravenswood Congregational: “What a time we all had then....The church was really alive with people.”⁷ One can easily imagine that for many members of Ravenswood Congregational Church, it seemed as though their church would endure forever. These members’ sense of Ravenswood as a place was so tied into their church, the community’s survival without the church would have been hard to comprehend. Yet today the corner of Montrose and Hermitage, the church home for nearly a hundred years,

⁴ Rev. Raymond Lord to the members of First Congregational Church of Ravenswood, June 28, 1967. Papers of the Ravenswood Congregational Church, Box 1, folder 17, Hild Regional Historical Collections, The Chicago Public Library.

⁵ Rev. Wilfred Hanson to the members of First Congregational Church of Ravenswood, June, 1968. Papers of the Ravenswood Congregational Church, Box 1, folder 17.

⁶ “Ravenswood Church Closes Today,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 26, 1969, N5.

⁷ Ibid.

is an empty lot, occupied only by tall weeds, scattered wild flowers, and the occasional plastic soda bottle.

The fate of Ravenswood Congregational Church in the decades following World War II is illustrative of the fortunes of many of the traditional, place-based mainline Protestant churches on the north shore in the post-war era. Young people who had grown up in north shore churches moved to the suburbs, keeping ties with the old neighborhood only so long as their parents remained. The new demographic groups who moved to the north shore from the 1950's on had few ties to the old mainline churches, in addition to coming from cultures that diverged wildly from the middle class, white, Anglo-Protestant mold. As the old Protestant congregations died out, their buildings came to serve new populations or were torn down completely.

These processes began during the Great Depression and World War II, events that ushered in an era of complexity in the life of the north shore. Through the 1930's and into the early forties, Uptown retained its reputation as a thriving bright light district. Chicagoans crowded into its movie theaters and ballrooms distract themselves from the weight of Depression-era troubles. For the churches of the north shore, however, the period was one of stress and adaptation. Many north shore churches, hobbled by enormous debts from the building programs of the 1920's and struggling to achieve parity in membership numbers, had to fight for survival.

The proliferation of Protestant congregations on the landscape reversed during this period and church construction halted completely. Many smaller churches found it beneficial to unite with nearby congregations of the same denomination. In 1935, the congregation of Uptown's Sheridan Road Methodist Church merged with Epworth

Methodist Church in Edgewater. The Rock River Methodist Conference, of which both churches were part, determined that the north shore had “too many Methodist churches for the times.”⁸ Bishop Ernest Lynn Waldorf explained: “It was the old plan...to have a Methodist church within walking distance of every family in the city; but the automobile has changed all that, and this setting up of one centralized congregation in place of two, not widely separated as far as modern transportation goes, is wisely keeping abreast of changed conditions.”⁹ Other mergers included that of James Ainslie’s Argyle Community Church with Summerdale Congregational (the fruit of one of Rev. William Lloyd’s early Sunday schools in the 1870’s) and of Ravenswood Christian Church with North Shore Christian Church: “Both groups thought one church would be stronger than two smaller congregations and could promote more effectively a program of building and expansion.”¹⁰

While Ravenswood and the western part of Edgewater, where the single family owner-occupancy rate remained higher, managed to retain some residential stability through the Depression and World War II, the stretches of land along the lake with high concentrations of apartment buildings and residential hotels experienced drastic upheaval. During the 1930’s, the stock market crash contributed to a weak rental market and thousands of empty apartments. Many of these apartments filled up during the war, when the plethora of tiny kitchenettes constructed in Uptown and Edgewater during the 1920’s

⁸ Bruce Greene, “History--Sheridan Road United Methodist Church,” Epworth Methodist Church, <http://www.epworthchicago.org/enter> (accessed November 21, 2005).

⁹ John Evans, “Two Methodist Churches Will Merge Today,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 13, 1935, SW1.

¹⁰ “Plan Merger of Two North Side Churches,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 20, 1946, N1.

drew a transient population of defense industry workers and the wives or girlfriends of servicemen posted at the nearby Great Lakes Naval base. Partly as a result of its proximity to this base—just one rail stop away—by the late forties Uptown had lost its reputation as a swanky, brightly lit entertainment district. Jackie Lyden and Chet Jakus observe, “Uptown drew a much different crowd in 1949 than it did in 1926. Rowdy servicemen on leave from bases near the city surged into the neighborhood. At the public transportation stops, particularly the el and train stations, honkey-tonk joints brassily competed for attention.”¹¹ Uptown now became known as “a shabby area of one room kitchenettes and transients.”¹²

In the face of a post-war housing shortage, landlords subdivided the area’s larger, more opulent apartments into rooming houses as well, and affluent residents who had formed the backbone of the mainline Protestant congregations on the north shore fled to the suburbs in even greater numbers. The drastic down-sizing of the housing stock spelled the end of the north shore as a fashionable destination for young professionals; instead, “[t]he thousands of illegal conversions that took place in the late forties changed Uptown from a bastion of middle class values to a magnet for the direly poor.”¹³ In the 1950’s, these small, cheap apartments attracted tens of thousands of Appalachian migrants displaced by a contracting mining industry, in addition to sizable contingents of Native Americans and Japanese-Americans as part of federal urban resettlement programs. The median income and education of Uptown residents dropped sharply.

¹¹ Jackie Lyden and Chet Jakus, *Landmarks and Legends of Uptown* (Chicago: np, 1980), 25.

¹² Roger Guy, *From Diversity to Unity: Southern and Appalachian Migrants in Uptown Chicago, 1950-1970* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 35.

¹³ Neal Amidei, “The Agony of Uptown,” *Omnibus Chicagoland* (July 1968): 36.

In startling contrast to the deteriorating condition of the old flats, apartment buildings, and hotels occupied by Appalachians and other new residential groups, in the 1950's the old mansions along Sheridan Road disappeared to make way for towering high-rise apartment buildings. These buildings housed wealthy and educated whites, creating stark demographic and spatial divisions along the lakeshore. Affluent residents viewed the newer populations crowded into tiny apartments as a threat to property values, setting up major conflicts over the place identity of the community.

As the residential population of Uptown and Edgewater grappled with these divisions, other factors undermined the commercial life of the district. In the 1950's, the rise of television gutted the public entertainment life of theaters and ballrooms through which Uptown had blossomed. Opulent movie palaces like the Uptown and Riviera Theaters survived, but with programs far more austere than the old stage revues and full orchestras that accompanied a picture in the 1920's. Retail business suffered as well. As late as 1950, Uptown had boasted more retail floor space and higher sales than the Loop, but in the decade that followed suburban shoppers came to prefer stores accessible by automobile.¹⁴ Moreover, many of Uptown's new residents did not have the disposable income to support a local retail district. Between 1950 and 1960 the Broadway-Lawrence shopping district fell from first to ninth in retail trade between the Loop and Evanston.¹⁵

In Uptown, Edgewater, and Ravenswood, these transformations profoundly affected the mainline Protestant churches that had prevailed since the suburban era. The same cheap apartments that attracted Appalachians and Native Americans in the 1950's

¹⁴ Guy, 33.

¹⁵ "Private Funds are Key to Future," *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1962.

made Uptown a port of entry for other immigrant groups in the ensuing decades. These ethnic groups helped to create a landscape of unprecedented—and, to longtime residents, sometimes unsettling—diversity. Members of these population groups often preferred to worship at ethnic churches or small Pentecostal storefront missions.¹⁶ Appalachians eschewed organized religion altogether; while Baptist and Church of God churches had provided social centers and community cohesion in Appalachia, many migrants felt that “the forms and rituals of southern migrants were unwelcomed in Chicago.”¹⁷

Often, the old Protestant church buildings built around the turn of the twentieth century saw new uses. Churches emerged as some of the few functioning roots of stability in changing communities, and many north shore churches went from social gathering places to social service agencies. Others took on new congregations entirely. St. Simon’s Episcopal, which closed in 1936, became a department store warehouse. Then, in 1956, a Nisei congregation remodeled it for religious use.¹⁸ In 1957, North Shore Baptist Church started a mission to serve Spanish-speaking people, which held services in the church on Sunday afternoons. By 1962, this mission had grown to 100 people. For their use, North Shore Baptist purchased the frame church that Ravenswood

¹⁶ In 1960, the Edgewater Ministerial and Rabbinical Association sponsored a survey of religious identification in the district. The survey found that the three highest identifications came in at 46.5% of Edgewater residents identified as Roman Catholic, 15.1 Lutheran, and 8.7 Jewish. The old mainline Protestant congregations mustered much smaller percentages: Presbyterian, 5.6, Methodist, 5.4, and Episcopal, 2.0, with the Congregational denomination meriting no specific identification at all. “Religion Count Is Tabulated in Edgewater,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 3, 1960, N_A2. The remaining percentages were: Baptists, 4.1; Greek Orthodox, 2.3%; United Church of Christ, 1.4%; Pentecostal, 1.3%; Evangelical Free, 0.5%; Mission Covenant, 0.3%; others, 3.5%; no religious affiliation or active religious background, 3.3%.

¹⁷ Guy, 23. Interview, Roger Guy with Helen Elam, December 18, 1994.

¹⁸ Genevieve Flavin, “Uptown Group Points to New Look of Area; Seek Designation as Renewal Area,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 11, 1956, N7.

Methodist Episcopal had inherited from downtown's First Methodist Church nearly ninety years before. In the late 1970's, North Shore Church moved to the suburbs, selling its building to an evangelical Baptist congregation, while a Hispanic congregation purchased Sheridan Road Methodist's old building.

While all north shore churches struggled after the 1950's, when much of the population base that supported the old mainline Protestant churches migrated to the suburbs, the landscape of each north shore community contributed to the fate of its churches. Because the poorest residents of the north shore clustered in Uptown, the churches there experienced the most dramatic reversals. Like the old movie palaces, the huge urban cathedrals were out of place in the new milieu. Maintenance of these facilities became an insurmountable challenge to tiny, elderly congregations, and many churches died out or merged with other congregations. St. Simon's and the North Shore Christian Church were razed, and the Great Church at the Crossroads, Buena Memorial, was torn down in 1996 after the massive timbered roof collapsed through the main sanctuary and into the basement.



Figure 66. The destruction of Buena Memorial Presbyterian Church, 1996. Midwest Wrecking Company.

Churches in areas with a higher percentage of single-family homes fared better. In Ravenswood, which retained the domestic place identity of its early days, citizens succeeded in fighting off commercial enterprises and the extension of transportation networks that would have transformed it. Even after the erection of apartment buildings, the community retained a quiet, residential identity, and its small churches generally managed to carry on by serving new populations. In Edgewater, churches that prepared to serve urban populations in the 1920's were often able to maintain a foothold in the life of the community by acting as community institutions that welcomed a broad spectrum of neighborhood residents.

Like the most successful churches of the nineteen-teens and 1920's, the north shore churches that adapted to the new landscape and new social conditions have endured. Edgewater Presbyterian embraced the cultural diversity of Edgewater, ministering to a diverse membership with a large Nigerian contingent. The small congregations of the People's Church and Epworth Methodist support ministries of service to the homeless of Uptown and Edgewater. The Church of the Atonement survived through the 1960's and 1970's by serving a population of gay men. In Ravenswood, Ravenswood Methodist Episcopal became Ravenswood Fellowship United Methodist after a 1987 merger between Ravenswood Methodist and a United Methodist congregation of Japanese-Americans relocated from internment camps after WWII. The 14th Church of Christ Scientist is now the Philadelphia Romanian Church of God. A Japanese American community, prominent in Uptown and Ravenswood since 1945, worships at Japanese-language services at North Shore Baptist.

The changing religious landscape of the north shore may be seen most clearly in the fate of the Ravenswood Club building at the corner of Wilson and Ashland. Designed by J.E.O. Pridmore—architect of the 1911 addition and expansion of the Church of the Atonement and of the 1926 Uptown Temple—the Ravenswood Club was constructed in 1899, the consummate symbol of the club-centered neighborhood social life that replaced the church-centered neighborhood social life at the end of the nineteenth-century. It contained an auditorium with a stage, large meeting rooms, parlors, a billiard room and a bowling alley.¹⁹ In 1920, the building became a Masonic lodge and it continued in this capacity until 2004.²⁰ Derelict, requiring many repairs, and up for sale, the building was purchased by a Vietnamese Buddhist community. This group restored the building, transforming it into the Truc Lam Buddhist Temple. Truc Lam Temple has swiftly become a new local landmark, speaking to the presence of a large Southeast Asian



Figure 67. The Ravenswood Club, around the turn of the twentieth century. On a visible corner, it served as a central meeting place for Ravenswood residents. Compass Rose Cultural Crossroads.



Figure 68. The Ravenswood Club building as the Paul Revere Masonic Temple, at the turn of the twenty-first century. Landmark Illinois.

¹⁹ “Real Estate Transaction 3,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 27, 1899, 27.

²⁰ Christopher Hayes, “This Old Lodge,” *Chicago Reader*, April 2, 2004.

population on the north shore. The temple's annual public displays for the celebration of the Buddha's birthday announce its presence in and commitment to the life of the wider community. Only a few blocks from the former site of the Ravenswood Congregational Church, the Truc Lam Temple expresses the new face of the north shore's religious landscape.



Figure 69. The porch of the Truc Lam Temple, decorated for the annual celebration of Buddha's birthday, 2010. Truc Lam Temple.

Place Identity and Religious Space

Place identity and religious space intersected on the north shore in a variety of ways during the transformative decades between 1870 and 1930. Throughout this period, religious space was clearly affected by the broader landscape and the secular cultural attitudes that shaped it. Transportation and its corollary, mobility, determined how people used and conceived of space, religious or otherwise. The social class of residents governed both the demographics of church membership and the financial resources available to church building committees, while the density and scale of surrounding residential and commercial buildings influenced the size and ornamentation of churches.

Religious groups and the buildings they erected on the north shore shaped the wider community in turn, serving as arbiters of social relations, status and cultural authority, and public morals. The establishment of churches marked these suburban residential developments as truly cosmopolitan communities for the respectable consumer. Churches functioned as place-makers, centers for religious and organizational life. The church life of Ravenswood Congregational, in the context of a self-contained commuter village, promoted social integration and spurred an organic and all-encompassing community life. For all the nostalgia evinced by Ravenswood's early residents, however, this all-encompassing community life was also dependent upon racial, social, and economic homogeneity. And as the experience of William and Amelia Pettitt illustrates, space for conflict and intra-community exclusion existed even within this homogeneous atmosphere. Thus, churches had the capacity to serve both as catalysts for social integration and as exclusionary tools that traced out acceptable boundaries of social behavior.

Church structures also shaped the wider community by functioning as public expressions of status and cultural authority. The Church of the Atonement in Edgewater projected to potential investors the high tone of Cochran's residential community, while Buena Memorial's monumental cathedral demonstrated the central place the church saw for itself in the new urban life of Uptown. While churches projected a particular kind of cultural authority onto the landscape, in many ways church buildings reflected the same dynamics as other types building in these communities. They were constructed for current uses and current needs. As the economic and social trajectory of the community changed, church structures—like residences or commercial buildings—were reused,

adapted, or razed to make way for newer, more impressive structures. While church structures often kept pace with the scale and size of the larger community, the building campaigns undertaken to erect these structures forced churches into a double bind. On the one hand, new or expanded facilities were often seen as a precursor to expanded congregations and church growth. On the other hand, debt from such building programs could put the church in long-term financial trouble and sometimes close to insolvency. As a symbol of status and authority, the church structure placed congregations in a delicate balancing act.

Finally, religious groups worked to regulate the moral geography of public space. The very presence of religious structures on the landscape symbolized a moral influence on the community, but churches also operated as bases for neighborhood organizing in the face of threats to residential community and public order. Until around 1910, evangelical Protestant churches predominated on the north shore; members of these churches shared a clear and commonly accepted view of moral geography that was predicated on common values and shared expectations. Because this sense of moral geography was rooted in the social and religious homogeneity of middle class evangelical Protestantism, moral rhetoric about space often concealed more prosaic concerns related to gender and class. The cloak of moral purity and defense of the home empowered women to political action in the public sphere, but it also concealed fears of behaviors and attitudes of groups that occupied space outside of the white, middle class Protestant moral sphere. Once transportation networks expanded into the north shore, the clearly accepted moral geography that had been enabled by geographic separation from external influences began to break down.

The clearest threat to the established moral geography of the north shore suburbs lay in a commercialism that challenged church and parental authority by validating attitudes and behaviors hitherto prohibited. For this reason, the moral rhetoric and activism of religious people on the north shore initially stood in direct opposition to such commercial values. Yet when religiously motivated efforts to regulate public morality proved less than fully successful, churches were faced with a choice to withdraw from the life of the modern city or to adapt to it. Often, churches attempted to maintain authority and visibility by adopting strategies drawn from the very sphere they had previously opposed, erecting eye-catching signs, monumental structures, and advertising their product—Christianity—in public space. Churches also offered leisure activities within the protected moral geography of the church property that directly competed with secular institutions and commercial amusements. The massive New Community House built by Edgewater Presbyterian demonstrated both that church's continued commitment to the changing Edgewater community and its goal of being a community institution on the order of—in the words of Robert Park—"the public library or the Young Men's Christian Association, in which any member of the community...has an interest."²¹ The urbanization of the north shore and the rise of the commercial sphere transformed religious expression by integrating it more fully into a competitive market for the energy and attention of north shore residents.

Religion played a more central role in shaping the place identity of the north shore during the suburban period. Certain conditions endemic to suburban life—small

²¹ Robert Park, "Review: The Malden Survey," *American Journal of Sociology* 27, no. 1(1921): 119.

communities, homogeneous populations, religious uniformity—possessed the capacity to produce a geographically centralized congregational church that mimicked some aspects of the parish form. However, the gradual undercutting of these conditions by the forces of urbanization—particularly the rise of ethno-religious pluralism and of the commercial sphere—produced a fragmented landscape of competing churches in which the traditional association of church and territory was disrupted. Two churches like the People's Church and the North Shore Church offered diametrically opposed moral interpretations of the same geography. Furthermore, the anonymity of modern city life afforded a divorce of church attendance from community expectation, while the increasing use of the automobile widened the acceptable distances for church attendance.

More and more, people came to think about the community that made up a church as divorced from geographical space. As church-going became a matter of personal choice governed by market forces very similar to any other commercial product, it became separated from the overlapping ties of everyday life in a geographically constrained community. It became separated from a sense of place. When church members uprooted their physical moorings, the depth of their attachment to a church community became more tenuous; one church could easily be interchanged with another. As the spatial relationship between north shore churches and their members frayed, members came to view community bonds and obligations in a different way, a shift that put the long-term survival of many north shore churches into question.

Further Research

Because the topic of religious space in the context of local places has attracted so little attention in the past, this dissertation opens up many different paths for further research. A similar study could tie national movements like temperance, Progressivism, and the Social Gospel into the narrative more clearly and fully, as well as flesh out the means of local church cooperation and the relationship of local churches to both citywide church organizations and the national denominations. To complement the study of inter-Protestant denominational relationships, a more integrated exploration of local Catholic churches—particularly those in the early suburbs—would provide opportunities for comparing and contrasting the parish form to the congregational form.

Any local history narrative of lived religion would gain from the interpolation of biographical sketches of the men and women who were members of the profiled churches. A detailed character exploration also has the potential to illuminate the hitherto obscured role that women played in church building. Historians of American religion have taken pains to emphasize the fact that the disproportionate church membership and voluntary activities of women sustained American church life in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.²² Yet the source material on the public face of congregations often focuses on men as church leaders and church builders, even where women's groups

²² Ann Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History," in *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, ed. Thomas Tweed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 87-107; Carolyn Haynes, "Women and Protestantism in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter Williams (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 300-318; Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, eds. Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 137-157. See also Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), who argues—somewhat provocatively—that an alliance between the women in the pews and an increasingly powerless clergy had the effect of sentimentalizing American mass culture.

provided the engines of financing the construction of church buildings.²³ Frank Stevenson's homage to the crucial yet often invisible role played by women in the construction of a new Ravenswood Presbyterian Church in 1914 elucidates this fact: "The women...as always, were the leaders in the planning and execution of all those many things which knit the church body together. They early made pledges for the lot, and then for the building, all of which were promptly paid. How they did it, then as now, we have never been able quite to figure out."²⁴ To figure out how women led in the planning and execution of church construction would exponentially expand our understanding of religious space in the local context. A gendered inquiry into how women influenced or operated in religious space differently from men would provide yet another avenue of research.

From a methodological standpoint, a deeper analysis of material culture—particularly into the religious artifacts and art on display inside church buildings or in the home—could provide a more nuanced explanation of the ways that both men and women expressed or understood their personal religious commitments. Such a study would be enriched by attention to issues like the perception of sacred space and the place of religion in rhetorical space. This methodology and approach could also be applied to a similar study of later-era suburban churches, from the 1940's to the present. The study of a later period would offer a different set of insights about the ways that religion manifests

²³ The eminent historian of American Protestantism, Martin Marty, has noted this dynamic in his own work: "Nationally, religious membership was predominantly a women's affair...Yet the cast of characters in public religion and thus necessarily in our present story of that form of faith was largely male." Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, Vol. 2: The Noise of Conflict, 1919-1941* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 31.

²⁴ Stevenson, 11.

itself in space and place in suburbs built for a different type of transportation, the automobile.

The methodology could also be expanded to include a detailed analysis of the residential spread of congregation members over time, using church directories or mailing lists, as well as an analysis of how and how often members attend church, all of which would illuminate how the spatial distribution of members affects church commitments. In the context of residential spatial distribution, a closer look at class and racial diversity within and between churches would help answer a different set of questions. How does the use of space in churches in white communities differ from the use of space in black churches? In what ways are conceptions of religious space similar? How might such concerns in either type of church compare or contrast to a single church with a racially and socio-economically diverse membership? Along these lines, a comparative project might also explore different visions of religious space and place held by religious fundamentalists and religious modernists. One underlying question could concern the fact that fundamentalists made by far the best use of modern media space in the second half of the twentieth century; has this success affected fundamentalist conceptions of material space?

Outside of the field of religion, an analysis of the relationship of community institutions to space and place over time could be profitably applied in many different areas: lodges, women's clubs, neighborhood bars. A similar historical study of schools and the concept of education would shed light on current debates over neighborhood schools versus county-wide magnet programs. One might also apply theories of space and place to the commercial and civic spheres, all of which might start to provide some

answers to the basic question: What is the value of place-centered institutions in the creation of community?

Conclusion

This dissertation's focus on physical space makes clear the fact that religion does not exist in an intellectual or theological vacuum, but interacts in tangible ways with the culture of which it is a part. Because manifestations of religion in space illustrate wider cultural impulses, in the future religion should be integrated into a wider discussion of social and community dynamics. Scholars must begin to look at churches not only as sacred spaces, but as public spaces, public institutions that exert power in the community and in turn are affected by changing dynamics in the community.

Some factors highlighted by the dissertation—that the structure of congregational life depends on the kinds of transportation available to members, that a crowded and competitive religious sphere ends up with characteristics of a commercial market—help to explain certain trends in religious culture at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century: the weakness of organized denominations, the prevalence of mega churches surrounded by seas of parking, a more and more polarized religious discourse in the public sphere. Ideological homogeneity might be easier to maintain in a religious market that creates niche products rather than a church form grounded in messy negotiations of place identity.

In the twenty-first century, ideals about the separation of church and state lead many people to argue that religion does not belong in public life or public discourse. We forget the extent to which evangelical Protestant religion dominated public life up well

into the twentieth century. Because religion is so deeply intertwined with—and often expresses—other aspects of culture, the intersection of religion and space illuminates much about people's assumptions and aspirations at different points in time. Simply by being part of the physical landscape and the social community, religious institutions engaged in public life. They operated both as religious bodies and as communal institutions within the body politic and situated in public space. Churches negotiated a delicate balance as public entities, sometimes competing with, sometimes co-opting, sometimes cooperating with other cultural forces. The north shore neighborhoods of Ravenswood, Edgewater, and Uptown served as an experimental cauldron for the effects of modern city culture, and the churches in these communities must be considered as central players in the resulting transformations.

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